

Commentary

VOLUME NINETY-FIVE • NUMBER FIVE • MAY 1993

Clintonism Unmasked

Irwin M. Stelzer

Immigrants and Family Values / *Francis Fukuyama*

Are Russian Jews in Danger? / *Peter Brodsky*

Blessing Capitalism / *Paul Johnson*

Mary McCarthy in Retrospect / *Joseph Epstein*

Israel Watch: The Nerve of Ruth Wisse / *Edward Alexander*

Movies and Middle-Class Rage / *Terry Teachout*

Books in Review: *Glenn C. Loury* / *Robin Roger* /
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Letters from Readers

Crown Heights

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

In his excellent article, "The Crown Heights Riot & Its Aftermath" [January], Philip Gourevitch accurately describes a city gone astray. What actually helped achieve this sad state of affairs was the "affirmative-action" approach employed by the press. In the *New York Times* of September 1, 1991, A.M. Rosenthal excoriated members of his own profession for reporting these incidents as if they were a "culture clash." What happened in Crown Heights was, in Rosenthal's words, a "pogrom," a word which few writers other than Mr. Gourevitch have understood. Rosenthal expressed further outrage that the reportage provided the troublemakers with an excuse to continue the violence. Excellent examples of what offended Rosenthal appeared in the writings of his own colleagues at the *Times*. . . .

On the very day that Rosenthal's column was printed, a Reporter's Notebook piece also appeared in the *Times*. The author, Andrew Yarrow, in discussing the forthcoming West Indian-Labor Day parade, said that residents and politicians were "hoping that this typically joyous annual celebration would not cause more violence between blacks and Jews." Yarrow trotted out the suffocating banner of evenhandedness to avoid assigning any blame for the violence in Crown Heights. Such evenhandedness is almost beyond belief when one looks at the statistics: 158 injured policemen, 8 of whom were shot; Korean stores looted; and 15 police radio-car torchings—all as a consequence of black activities. "Many Blacks, No Jews Arrested in Crown Heights," read a headline in the *Amsterdam News*, a black-owned newspaper, on August 24.

The "hate peddlers," as Rosenthal aptly termed them, were treated with great deference by the reporters; every word they uttered was quoted, without any background given; every article in which they were mentioned presented them with a perfect platform to air their views. . . .

In an article in the *Times*'s Week in Review section (September 1, 1991), Felicia Lee, after cataloguing various black grievances,

called the death of Gavin Cato, the young boy who was accidentally killed by a hasidic driver, "a metaphor for victimization," in effect condoning all that followed. . . .

Ari Goldman informed us in the *Times* of August 31, 1991 that Al Sharpton had stated he would "fight the Hasidim in Crown Heights as he fought the Italians in Bensonhurst" in the wake of the killing of Yusuf Hawkins, a black youth, two years earlier. But Goldman neglected to point out that Reverend Sharpton's analogy went badly astray: it was the Jew, Yankel Rosenbaum, who was stabbed to death by blacks, as they encircled him, shouting, "Kill the Jew."

Yes, a pogrom had taken place in Crown Heights, but the *New York Times*, along with too many other publications, chose to overlook it. . . .

SOL E. HARRISON
Huntingdon Valley, Pennsylvania

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

"The Crown Heights Riot & Its Aftermath" by Philip Gourevitch is both informative and thoughtful. Nevertheless, I believe that discussion of the role played in the riot by New York City's mayor, David Dinkins, is irrelevant to the problem of anti-Jewish violence.

The current hostilities were foreshadowed by events at the time of the New York City teachers' strike of 1968, when establishment figures in government, the press, and the arts refused to take anti-Semitism seriously. More recently, during the 1991 Crown Heights riot, the media and some elected officials showed the same insensitivity to violence against Jews.

The riot continued for several days after the stabbing of Yankel Rosenbaum; in other words, Jews were still being attacked for running over Gavin Cato after an innocent Jewish visitor to the city had already been killed to "avenge" the accident. During this period, the press did not distinguish between the mob and its victims. Mayor Dinkins was the first public figure to use the word "lynching."

The *New York Times*, in its editorial of November 23, 1992, "Gas on the Crown Heights Fire," said that "New Yorkers must stop fanning the flames of hate." But indifference, too, can fan the flames of hate. Anna Quindlen, over a year

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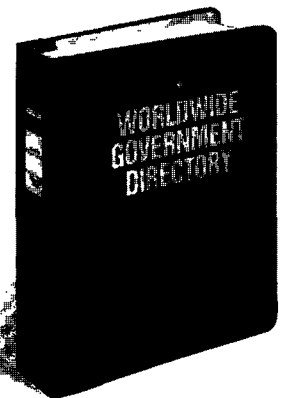
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earlier (September 8, 1991), wrote a *Times* column about the strife in Crown Heights without once referring to the murder of Yankel Rosenbaum:

The cries of "Heil Hitler" that greeted the Hasidim in Crown Heights were unforgivable and disgraceful. They were also predictable. The misery that envelops the lives of poor black people in this country is so pervasive, so amorphous, that fixing blame is often impossible. Sometimes it is simplest to look for the white face.

When influential writers fail to understand the seriousness of taking a human life, they are legitimizing violence. When they say "it is simplest to look for the white face," they are condoning ethnic warfare.

There may be conflict between Jews and blacks, but there is no conflict of interest. A safe society is good for blacks, Jews, and everyone. Having gotten away with murder, a member of the lynch mob that stabbed Yankel Rosenbaum may kill again. No one benefits when violence is tolerated.

GEORGE JOCHNOWITZ
College of Staten Island
Staten Island, New York

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

. . . I would like to add an important point to Philip Gourevitch's excellent article, specifically to his discussion of Mayor David Dinkins's disappointing performance in race relations in general and in the Crown Heights riot in particular. Two friends of mine, both of whom have held high positions in government, met privately and separately with the mayor about his problem with the Jewish community. They both came away surprised and dismayed, both using almost the same words: "I couldn't get through. He just doesn't understand." . . .

Only fools and hotheads call the mayor an anti-Semite. He is as decent a person as has ever held his office. And he truly wants to be, as the overused cliché goes, the mayor of all the people. But not only does he fail to transcend his identity as part of one ethnic group, he fails even to recognize that there is a problem. At one point he complained about those who called the riot a pogrom, saying that a "pogrom" by definition is government-sponsored—as if semantics could erase the memory

of the terror of those three-and-a-half days.

Almost as disappointing was the non-reaction of the Jewish establishment organizations during and immediately after the rioting. As Mr. Gourevitch says, the Hasidim are "alien to the majority of their fellow Jews," and, in the words of the policeman he quotes, "pretty basically un-American." But even though the mainline Jewish organizations historically have defended "pretty basically un-American"-seeming people, they were too embarrassed by the sight of Jews rejecting modern ways to be as outraged about Crown Heights as they were about the beating of Rodney King in Los Angeles. This is the other ugly face of Crown Heights.

NOSSON SCHERMAN
Brooklyn, New York

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

I was pleased to see COMMENTARY finally address the issue of David Dinkins's double-dealing approach to racial strife in New York City. . . . But Philip Gourevitch fails to strike at the real reasons for the mayor's inaction in the face of black-racist violence in Crown Heights. For this one must look at the phenomenon known as the Inner City Broadcasting Corporation (ICBC), . . . consisting primarily of two New York radio stations, WBLS-FM and WLIB-AM.

While WBLS is basically a music station, . . . WLIB maintains a mostly talk format in which the entire broadcast day consists of the most incendiary and divisive black-racist propaganda imaginable.

It was on WLIB in the days and weeks following the 1991 Crown Heights riot that "community activists" like Al Sharpton, Sonny Carson, and Colin Moore, aided and abetted by the station's on-air hosts and callers, put forth a twisted string of *Protocols-of-the-Elders-of-Zion*-style canards about the Lubavitchers in particular and the Jewish community of New York in general. These ranged from Sharpton's charge that Yosef Lifsh had run over young Gavin Cato intentionally, to Moore's revelation that, in accordance with Jewish tradition, Lifsh and the rest of the Lubavitcher *rebbe's* entourage had been drinking schnapps at the cemetery they had visited earlier that afternoon and were all intoxicated at the time of the accident. Also broadcast were innumerable

cries that "Jewish interests" controlled the Brooklyn district attorney's office, and that any fair legal treatment of Lemrick Nelson, Jr. was therefore impossible.

Now one might be inclined to wonder what sort of irresponsible and destructive individuals would own and operate a broadcast entity such as this. . . . The owners, in fact, are the majority of New York City's black-power elite, including former Manhattan borough president Percy Sutton, *Amsterdam News* publisher Wilbert Tatum, and, most disturbingly, the city's 106th and current mayor, David N. Dinkins. I mention Dinkins because, although he did engage in the highly publicized and heavily criticized 1989 . . . "sale" of his . . . stake in ICBC to his son, the tone of the rhetoric on these stations was set during his long period of ownership. . . .

M. HIRAM LIPOW
Bronx, New York

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

The second night of rioting in Crown Heights was reported by WBZ, the NBC-TV affiliate in Boston, without any reference to the murder of Yankel Rosenbaum. When I called the station to ask why, the assistant to the producer told me that they "didn't consider it an important part of the story." Philip Gourevitch helped me understand this ugly absurdity for the first time: if WBZ defined the story as one of blacks rioting because of social injustice, then the lynching of a Jew was irrelevant and could be left out entirely.

The coverage of Crown Heights by National Public Radio (NPR) provides another example of Mr. Gourevitch's thesis. NPR stayed true to the theme of white injustice against blacks with its even-handed attitude to the behavior of both sides. The problem, according to NPR, was that "two communities each think the other gets better treatment." A Jewish man was quoted as saying that the Hasidim "could do more" by having their children play with black children. A black man was quoted as saying that the main issue is America's indifference to black poverty.

I watched the news of the rioting while having coffee with a black neighbor. He shook his head and said, "Someone should teach them you don't go out and kill somebody because of an acci-

dent." A black woman from Crown Heights was quoted in the *New York Times* as saying, "I don't think with my skin. Where is all this community rage when black children are killed every month by drug dealers' bullets?"

These were sensible, humane reactions . . . to the horror of scapegoating and violence. The NPR attitude, however, is condescending: its message is that blacks are not equal to other people since they cannot be held responsible for their own violent actions. This message encourages whites to see all blacks as murderous and irrational. NPR presents the issue as one of blacks against Hasidim, or blacks against whites, instead of as decent people, black and white, against the minority of blacks who have taken a wrong turn into hate and anti-Semitism. . . .

KARIN MCQUILLAN
Cambridge, Massachusetts

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

We American Jews rarely "get it": fascism inevitably includes Jew-baiting and Jew-killing even if it wears a black face. With rare exceptions, such as Philip Gourevitch's excellent but frightening article, we Jews are still practicing the politics of what is called in Yiddish "*sha shtill*" (be quiet and don't make any noise) by holding symposia with people who openly express their disdain for us while we remind them about what good pals we all were not too long ago. As a former true believer who is now wiser, I was very involved in the highly dangerous civil-rights struggles in South Carolina during the early 1950's. But this now counts for nothing. . . .

What to do? First, like the Israelis, we must never hesitate to condemn and challenge every anti-Semitic lie and deed. Second, we must refuse to participate in "reconciliation" meetings until black leaders, politicians, ministers, academics, and business leaders condemn black anti-Semitism and name names like Louis Farrakhan and Leonard Jeffries. (This includes Mayor David Dinkins of New York who, Mr. Gourevitch correctly argues, is *not* anti-Semitic but lacks the courage to express his convictions. . . .) Third, let us demand that our local, state, and federal officials (including President Clinton) condemn the anti-Semites by name. Fourth, we must call the Christian clergy to ac-

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Hamas and the Muslim Fundamentalists Was Israel justified in expelling 400+ of their leaders?

The U.N. Security Council, unconcerned apparently about dreadful things being perpetrated in many parts of the world, "strongly condemned" Israel for the temporary expulsions of 400+ Hamas terrorist leaders, and threatened sanctions. In order to be able to judge Israel's actions, the world must understand who and what Hamas and the Muslim fundamentalists really are.

What are the facts?

A fundamentalist terror organization. Hamas is a Muslim fundamentalist terror organization. Hamas ideology combines pan-Arab religious and fundamentalist principles with radical Palestinian aims. It insists that "all of Palestine—from the (Jordan) river to the (Mediterranean) sea is holy Arab territory" and that its "liberation" is the immutable aim of the movement. Autonomy for the Palestinian Arabs, or even a Palestinian state, as proposed by the P.L.O., are totally unacceptable or at best tactical steps in the "liberation of all of Palestine."

Terror also against fellow Arabs. A basic ingredient in the ideology of Hamas is the use of terror, not only against Israeli Jews, but against all who oppose its political and religious zeal

and ideology. Hamas has killed hundreds of Palestinians, usually in the most gruesome manner and often in front of their families, for being "collaborators" with the Israelis or for suggesting political solutions to the "Palestinian problem" that are not in full accord with Hamas' ideology. But Hamas and the Islamic fundamentalists are not foes of just Israel. They are in mortal conflict with all secular Arab regimes. Some years ago, Iraq's Saddam Hussein boasted that he (personally) had shot 600 of "those traitors." In 1982, in response to a fundamentalist uprising, President Assad of Syria ordered an all-out assault in which an

estimated 20,000 people were killed. During the 1988 riots in Algiers, the army unceremoniously shot and killed between 150 and 300 demonstrators. Similar bloody scenarios have been replayed in Egypt, Saudi Arabia, Jordan and other Arab countries. There was never any public outcry. The media largely ignored those events, and there was certainly no emergency meeting of the U.N. Security Council.

Expulsion, a legitimate punishment. Different countries have different customs and different laws. In the United States, we have the death penalty—by hanging, lethal injection, firing squad, electric current, or poison gas—which is considered barbaric in much of the world,

including Israel. The Arabs have public beheadings and amputations, which we consider to be beyond the pale. The Israelis, having adopted their laws

from the British mandatory power, punish with expulsions for certain serious crimes.

There are those who insist that the expulsions of the Hamas terrorists are in violation of the Fourth Geneva Convention. But the Convention was composed to prevent repetition of the crimes of the Nazis, who, to serve their manic purposes, transported entire populations (or their survivors) from one end of Europe to another. And the Convention clearly states that "...the occupying power may undertake total or partial evacuation...if the security of the population...demands it." Certainly, Israel, just as any other country, has the right to self-preservation and the duty to protect its citizens.

It is clear that Israel has shown and continues to show a forbearance towards those who have vowed to destroy it that no other country would have shown. No other western country would tolerate such open sedition and armed insurrection. The fact that the Israelis have allowed the so-called intifada to survive for so many years, that they have expelled for only limited terms the 400+ leaders of the Hamas terrorists, is testimony to Israel's humanitarianism. Can the world imagine what Israel would do if Syria, for instance, would expel the Jews still remaining in that country? Israel would immediately take them in of course, just as it has taken in hundreds of thousands of other refugees and expellees from Arab countries.

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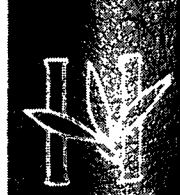
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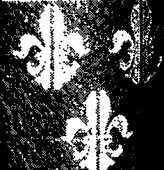
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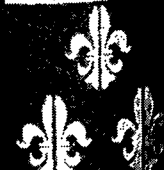
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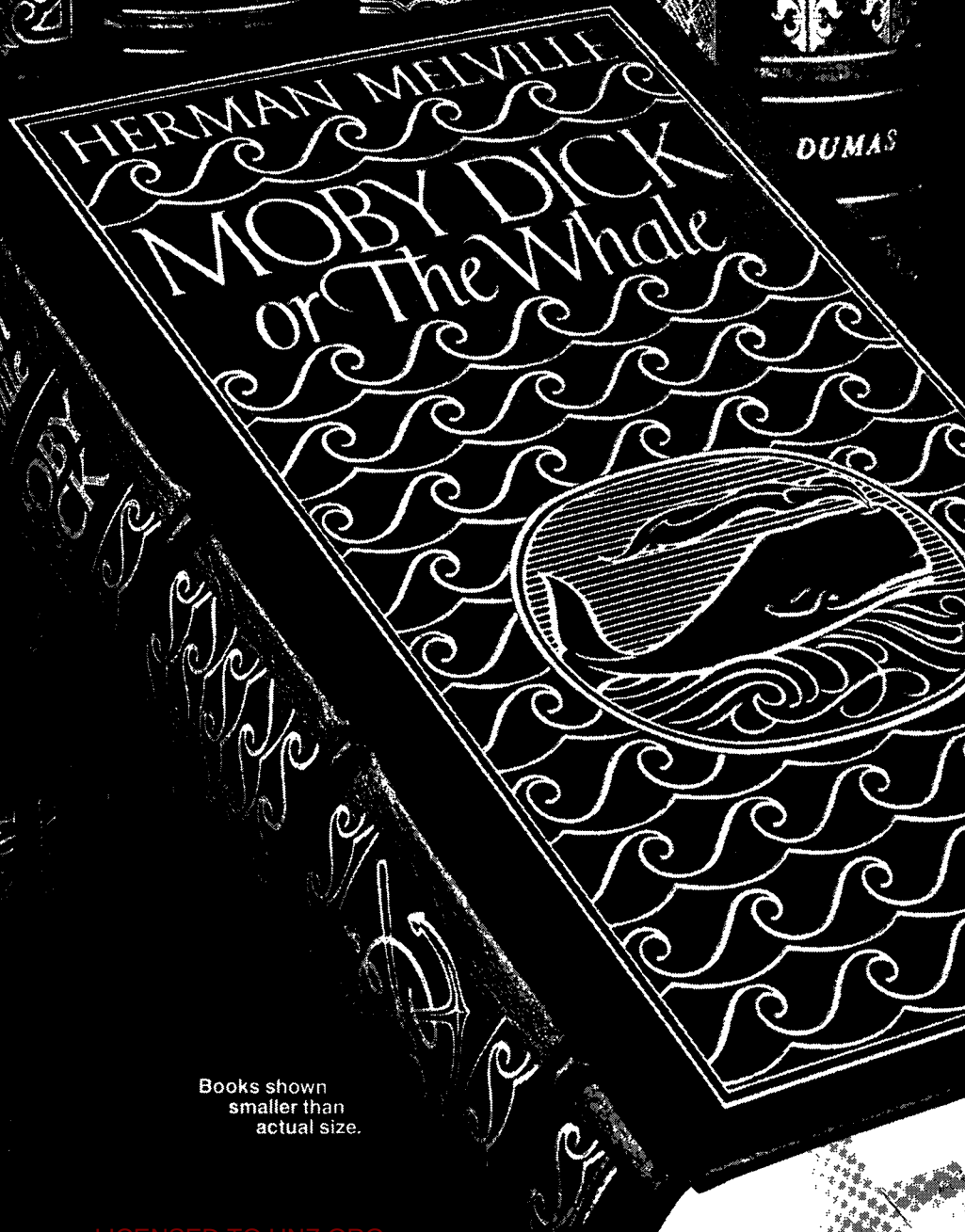
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count; they are always quick, and correctly so, to condemn racism against blacks, but how many among them voiced rage at the murder of Yankel Rosenbaum or the acquittal of his assailant? Finally, we must stop trying to *understand* why so many blacks are anti-Semites. Participating in this game permits black and white fence-sitters to rationalize the hatred and violence against Jews. . . .

It is only 45 years since Hitler was alive. Yet we have permitted the likes of Farrakhan and Jeffries to praise and voice support for this monster. Santayana was right when he said that those who do not remember the past are condemned to repeat it. . . .

SHELDON C. SELLER
Riverton, Connecticut

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

The account of the Crown Heights riot casts a peculiarly harsh light on one strong current of American history. As part of the generation which grew up during World War II, I can remember very well the hard images that came out of the American South in the post-war period—the segregation, the tribalized society which perverted jury-trial justice, the told and retold stories of lynchings, the blustering defense of the South by political bawlers like the late Senator Bilbo and his ilk.

Like many of my contemporaries, I supposed for a while that the 1960's affair of the murdered civil-rights workers and the acquittal of their killers was a sort of last gasp of that *ancien régime*. In the event, it turned out to be a harbinger of similar events almost three decades later—not in the rural South but in the urban jungles of America's "inner cities."

Senator Bilbo, Leander Perez, and their segregationist friends have found successors in Al Sharpton, Leonard Jeffries, Louis Farrakhan, and the rest of that grotty crew. The trial and acquittal of Lemrick Nelson, Jr. for the killing of Yankel Rosenbaum revives the tradition of the Mississippi killers who were allowed to walk free. . . .

The new hate-mongers are not the only rebirth of that older world to be found in America today. The horrors of the South were also softened and tolerated and prolonged by trimming politicians and double-talking apologists and a few journalists at the national level. The sophistry and intellectual

twisting employed by such people is now mirrored to a degree by the liberal academics, the media, and the journalistic establishment in the United States, who are concerned to "understand" rather than condemn the new tribalist racism, and so tolerate and encourage it—sometimes by default and sometimes directly.

The difference between these new apologists and those who protected the last-ditchers of the old South is that Bilbo and his people were fronting for a social system that was dying out. By contrast, the new tribalism is growing like a cancer, and growing faster for the equivocal response of America's media, and for the political cowardice it meets in public life. . . .

Living abroad, I have been lucky enough not to be caught up in any of these events (though Europe does have its own wrinkles on such matters). But even at a distance of several thousand miles, they make a depressing spectacle for an American—the more so because sometimes, late at night, I fancy I can hear Jefferson Davis and several Deep South Senators chuckling in their graves.

HERB GREER
Manchester, England

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

In his article, Philip Gourevitch writes that during the Crown Heights riot:

Blacks . . . sought to destroy and/or drive out their Jewish neighbors by force. In this respect, *the event was unprecedented in American history.* [Emphasis added]

But in the June 1992 COMMENTARY, Mr. Gourevitch himself reviewed *The Death of an American Jewish Community*, by Hillel Levine and Lawrence Harmon, a study of the Boston neighborhood of Mattapan. In the review, he discusses what he calls "a two-year period of urban terror" when blacks were encouraged by bankers and real-estate brokers to get the Jews out of the neighborhood.

To quote from the review:

Old Jews were taunted and mugged, housewives were beaten, synagogues burglarized, and Torah scrolls destroyed in arson attacks. . . . A young rabbi was called to his door one night by two young black men; while one handed him a note the other threw acid in his face, severely burning and nearly

blinding him. The note read: "Lead the Jewish racists out of Mattapan."

Crown Heights is *not* unprecedented in American history.

MIRIAM DISKIND
Brooklyn, New York

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

I read with great interest the thoughtful article by Philip Gourevitch, in which he attempts to make sense of the tragic events of August 1991. But he has included some negative and unfair stereotyping of the hasidic community that needs to be addressed.

Mr. Gourevitch writes: "[The Hasidim] tend to be openly critical of blacks, and their criticisms often smack of bigotry." I am certain that Mr. Gourevitch has not one bigoted molecule in his entire being, but he does not reinforce this assertion by providing at least one or two specific examples of hasidic criticisms which smack of bigotry. . . .

He then goes on to say that the Hasidim are perceived as aliens to just about everybody, including most Jews, because of "their uncompromising rejection of modern liberal society" and their "anachronistic, separatist ways." If by "rejection of modern . . . society" is meant an avoidance of all scientific advances of the past century, Mr. Gourevitch knows perfectly well that the Hasidim are no anachronists; unlike the Old Order Amish, the Hasidim drive cars, travel in airplanes, possess microwave ovens, personal computers, VCR's, radios, telephones (including cellular phones), fax machines, and other comforts and conveniences of modern life. . . . A hasidic woman may wear a *sheitl*, keep a kosher home, observe ritual purity, raise nine children—and also hold a college degree in mathematics and computer science and work as a systems engineer for General Motors, as I did for three years. Is this "anachronistic" and a "rejection of modern society"?

However, if by "anachronistic" Mr. Gourevitch means a determination to resist all cultural innovation that is in contradiction to Torah values, . . . and by "separatist" the decision to educate our children in private schools where they will be imbued with a veneration of God, a belief in revelation, and the hope of eternal reward for virtue instead of being introduced to Heather and her two Mommies

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and given explicit instruction in condom use, well, hail anachronism! Welcome separatism!

If Mr. Gourevitch and other champions of liberalism are determined to stamp such worthy and virtuous ideals with the denigrating slurs of "anachronism," "separatism," and "bigotry," then I can assert that the need for education, tolerance, respect, and understanding is more urgently required among the "majority" of Jews he represents than among the Hasidim. . . .

LYNN M. BERKOWITZ
Southfield, Michigan

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

The otherwise excellent article on the Crown Heights affair by Philip Gourevitch is marred by a few oversights. For example, Mr. Gourevitch writes:

Whenever blacks begin to riot, the reaction of official America . . . would be: here goes another explosion of racial tension . . . [which] means that blacks have been pushed to the wall [by] some terrible racist incident . . . we must

. . . be careful above all not to anger them further.

And he continues:

So deep is the American predisposition to perceive blacks as victims of racism that when they explode . . . we lack even the vocabulary to describe it. . . .

I suggest that what Mr. Gourevitch is really hinting at in the passages cited above is the profound American Jewish predilection for bending over backward to accommodate virtually anyone and anything proceeding under the banner of civil rights, or otherwise having the odor of "downtrodden minority." The Jewish people have always looked at the persecuted in this country, blacks foremost among them, and managed to see themselves groaning under the oppression of one cruel majority after another, from Egypt to Auschwitz. . . .

But with each new South-Central L.A., Crown Heights, Central Park jogger, or Chicago Bulls championship, more thoughtful people are getting a handle on this

crucial and ultimately unavoidable point: the behavior of young black men, juveniles in particular, who have grown up in fatherless homes kept afloat by an assortment of open-ended welfare programs is the only reason that many areas of our cities have become uninhabitable . . . ; it is the reason that business, capital, and hence employment, still shy away from the "black community"; it is the reason that poverty, far more materially severe in the 30's than today, has in our time become synonymous with danger; and, finally, it is the reason that Yankel Rosenbaum lay in his grave while his murderer frolicked at a party put on to celebrate his absurd acquittal.

KEVIN KENDRICK
Gaithersburg, Maryland

PHILIP GOUREVITCH writes:

I take it as a distressing sort of compliment to find that my assessment of the anti-Semitic riot in Crown Heights caused so many readers to recall the inadequate and inaccurate account of the event that was peddled by so much of the mainstream press. By describing the riot as a clash that was initiated and joined equally by Jews and blacks, by ignoring the prevalence of anti-Semitism in urban black political culture, and by drawing repeated equivalences between the accidental death of a black child struck by a car and the deliberate murder of a Jew, the press tended to confirm and legitimize the version offered by the rioters and their apologists.

In their letters, Sol E. Harrison, George Jochnowitz, Karin McQuillan, and Herb Greer rightly observe that the effect of such coverage was to belittle the lynching of Yankel Rosenbaum. Most of the reporting attempted to make the Crown Heights riot fit the template of the archetypal civil-rights story in which blacks are victims, and their violence—if not justified—is explainable, and even a cause for sympathy. Mr. Jochnowitz errs, however, in asserting that Mayor Dinkins's role in the riot was "irrelevant." Yes, official New York has failed to take anti-Semitism seriously in the past. But, as Nosson Scherman observes in his letter, Mayor Dinkins's failure to comprehend and respond to the legitimate needs and fears of Jews can be blamed on nobody but Mayor Dinkins. Whatever the failures of the press, Dinkins's failure

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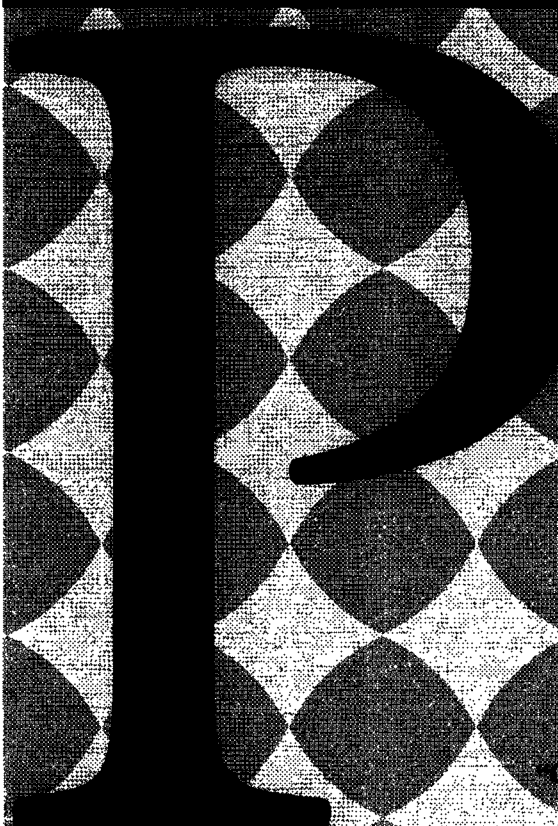
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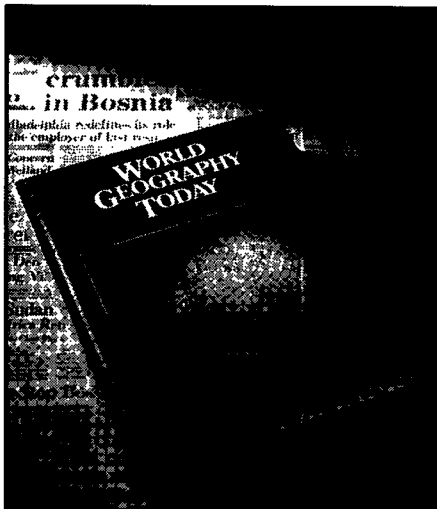
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in Crown Heights was his own. Had he shown toughness and resolve in confronting the anti-Semitic nature of the riot, and had he stood up to black racists as he has stood up to white racists, the press would have had to tell a different story.

M. Hiram Lipow is right to warn that peace is unlikely to come to the city so long as the mayor retains ties to racist radio stations. Despite a recent mild scolding of WLIR, Dinkins has shown a shameful indifference to one of the central fonts of prejudice in the city he says he wants to heal. The mayor's indulgence of intolerance when it comes from his political allies is one more example of his inexcusable blindness to the fact that blacks are not only victims of racism, but can be vicious racists themselves. As I sought to demonstrate in my article, this possibility—that blacks were the perpetrators of racism in Crown Heights—was not an idea readily available to the public imagination. Mr. Greer overstates matters when he writes that today's inner cities are simply a racially inverted version of the Jim Crow South, but in the case of Crown Heights, the classic view of blacks as victims was stood on its head.

In part because of the version put forward by the press and the city's leaders, many Jews, too, were shamefully slow to acknowledge what was really going on in Crown Heights. Nosson Scherman rightly recalls the often feeble response of secular Jewry's official organizations, which seem to have been so uncomfortable associating with the alien-seeming Hasidim that they failed to show solidarity with fellow Jews living on the front lines of the nation's racial battlegrounds. The thin-skinned "be-quiet-and-don't-make-any-noise" attitude described by Sheldon C. Seller affected many Jews, both in private and in official capacities. Even today, many prefer to conceal Crown Heights behind the band-aid of stagey public shows of black-Jewish harmony, like the recent fiasco with PBS's distorted film, *The Liberators*, than to address the poisonous elements within black political culture.

As Miriam Diskind points out, those elements have been around for a long time. But her claim that the Crown Heights riot was not unprecedented in American history stretches the point too far. She cites the story of the decimation of

the Jewish neighborhood of Mattapan in Boston, which I recounted in a book review. But that was not a riot, nor was it initiated or promoted exclusively by blacks. Blacks were foot soldiers in the campaign against the Jews of Mattapan, but the neighborhood's destruction was engineered by white politicians, city planners, and real-estate brokers in an absurdly ill-conceived and ultimately failed attempt to buy off black rage following the urban riots of 1968. Despite the similar intentions of the black perpetrators of anti-Jewish violence, any effort to equate the events of Mattapan with those of Crown Heights confuses rather than clarifies historical understanding.

By requesting that I cite specific examples of hasidic bigotry, Lynn M. Berkowitz seems confident that I will have to withdraw my claim that prejudice exists in that community. I did not quote bigoted hasidic utterances in my article because they seemed irrelevant, having had nothing to do with the cause or the effect of the riots. But in Crown Heights in late August 1991 Hasidim did make such remarks to me, and to other reporters, and characterized blacks in broad general terms as a criminal menace. Such unnecessary racial slurs, which are not in accordance with the teachings of Judaism or the public statements of hasidic leaders, play, however falsely, into the claim that Jews were the initiators of racial discord in the neighborhood.

Mrs. Berkowitz also takes offense at my mention of the "uncompromising rejection of modern liberal society" and "anachronistic, separatist ways" of the Hasidim. I am surprised at her umbrage. My language, as Nosson Scherman's letter clearly recognizes, was not meant to derogate the Hasidim, but to explain their difference from the general population and the often uneasy effect that difference has on their public relations. Finally, Mrs. Berkowitz's suggestion that I would like the Hasidim to change their ways is preposterous. Their ways are fine with me, even if mine are not fine with them, and I would like to see them protected by the city like all other citizens.

Finally, I am distressed by Kevin Kendrick's attempt to blame a Jewish mind-set for the political climate that brought on the Crown

Heights anti-Semitic riot and other recent instances of urban rioting. Is he serious when he imagines that Jews look at rioting blacks shouting "Heil Hitler" in the streets of Crown Heights and see "themselves groaning under the oppression of one cruel majority after another, from Egypt to Auschwitz"? He sides with the "more thoughtful people"—more thoughtful, apparently, than these Jews—who blame the welfare system for the riots. But this line of thinking is as misguided as are all other attempts to explain away the violence in Crown Heights as a clash of cultures. The riots were brought on not by welfare but by anti-Semitism. Unfortunately, Mr. Kendrick's reluctance to accept this fact is not merely his problem, but ours.

The Euromess

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

It was a pleasure for me, as a German citizen, to read Angelo M. Codevilla's insightful article, "The Euromess" [February]. In the article Mr. Codevilla states that people in Europe are "understandably wary of approving a level of government which they cannot control at all." Unfortunately, not all people in Europe have even been asked whether they approve this new level of government. For example, neither in Great Britain nor in Germany were people given an opportunity to express their opinions in regard to the new superstate. In Germany, the political class decided to dissolve the German state, giving up 80 percent of its sovereign rights to a monstrous European superbureaucracy, although public-opinion polls clearly indicated that a majority of the German people did not approve of the Maastricht treaty.

Surely, this should have been cause enough for a referendum. However, the German constitution does not provide for any plebiscites except for the purpose of changing the borders of states inside Germany. (Such referendums were in fact held after reunification in some of the new German states.)

Of course, the constitution could have been changed to permit a referendum (which was done in France). But the overwhelming majority of German politicians—of all parties—was quite happy with the situation as it was. Why

complicate things by calling for a referendum when it was well known that the German people did not share the Euro-enthusiasm of their representatives? Apparently, German politicians were more loyal to their foreign political colleagues pushing the idea of Maastricht than to their own population. Saying yes to the ratification of the Maastricht treaty was the "politically-correct" thing to do in the German political establishment.

... Several prominent individuals filed a lawsuit against the state on the ground that the ratification of the treaty violated Article 20 of the German constitution which states that "all state power emanates from the people." According to Article 79, it is inadmissible to change Article 20 in any way. The prosecuting parties argue that Maastricht abrogates Article 20 and is therefore unconstitutional. Since individuals usually do not have the right to sue for unconstitutionality, it is expected that the courts will reject the suit without a hearing. However, if the German supreme court were to agree to hear the suit, ratification of the

Maastricht treaty might well be judged unconstitutional.

The pending trial explains why the President of Germany, Richard von Weizsäcker, signed only the law of agreement to the Maastricht treaty, but not its ratification. In so doing, he evaded an interim order of the supreme court.

The disturbing conclusion I have drawn from Maastricht so far is that Germany is in danger of having its democratic foundations perverted by its political representatives. To be sure, the German people are governed by politicians they elected in free elections. But these politicians were elected solely to govern Germany, not to abolish it.

CORNELIA MROSE

Ober Modau
Germany

ANGELO M. CODEVILLA writes:

Cornelia Mrose marvels at the audacity of politicians, repositories of powers delegated to them by the German people, who now delegate powers to unaccountable Eurocrats in Brussels. Why marvel?

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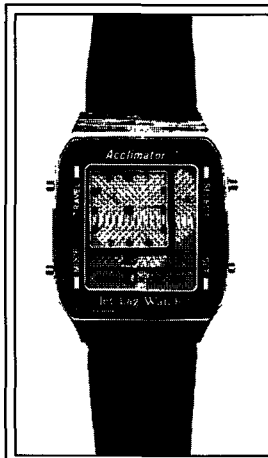
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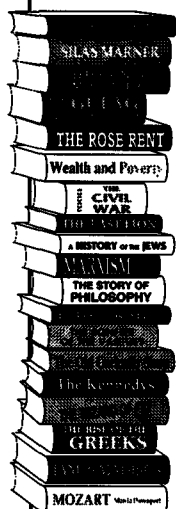
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cracies to regulate every facet of making a living, as well as of dealing with the most basic personal needs—and then making them the servants of unelected interests. Why did Europeans wait until the 1990's to discover that powers are being exercised over them for which there is no specific constitutional warrant? And why are so many complaints directed at the still largely theoretical threat of the Maastricht treaty?

The answer lies in the concept of sovereignty. Its early theorists were very clear: sovereignty is power without inherent limit, power to do anything not naturally impossible. Subjects under the sovereign power of Leviathan feared it. Then nationalism, compounded by democracy, invited people to confuse themselves with their country and to imagine that all were equally sovereign, and that government officials were public servants. Theorists of the modern welfare state, including the governor of New York, even tout it as an extended family to which everyone belongs equally. But government officials are not public servants, much less fathers of their peoples. They are sovereigns who dispose of half one's earnings. Nowadays the shortest route to wealth is a set of good contacts with a government agency, which means membership in one of the government's countless advisory committees.

Cornelia Mrose is upset that in the name of Germany the German government is giving up powers to Brussels. But in the name of Germany the government is also taxing all to dispense billions in the East. The accountability of the German bureaucrats who are making the wealth of some and the poverty of others is only theoretical—or rather fictional. The European Community's loveliest aspect is that it does the same things that national governments do, but without fig leaves.

Islam & the PLO

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

I am happy to find, at last, an article that alerts us to the threat of Islamic fundamentalism, Martin Kramer's "Islam vs. Democracy" [January].

As Bernard Lewis has pointed out in his book, *The Political Language of Islam*, central to Islam is *jihad*, which enjoins Muslims to expand the borders of Is-

lam. While Muslim apologists attempt to explain this away as a spiritual concept, Lewis informs us that the "overwhelming majority of classical theologians, jurists, and traditionalists . . . understood the obligation of *jihad* in a military sense, and have examined and expounded it accordingly." This makes the Islamic world tend to behave like an engulfing amoeba, an organism with a built-in formula for expansion and control that will continue on its way until it runs up against firm resistance. . . .

Unfortunately, the conduct of some Israeli politicians and some Western democracies suggests strongly to the Muslims that Israel can be whittled down and undone. The Islamic plan is clearly to gain Israeli-held territory here and there, as trades for "peace," until Israel loses strategic depth and becomes burdened with a burgeoning Arab population on both sides of the "green line," from which a never-ending supply of terrorists can be drawn, a situation that existed with the fedayeen in Gaza before the 1956 war.

This vulnerable condition would provide an irresistible spur to Islam to continue the conflict in its many forms. . . . The *only* way Islam can be made to desist from engaging in *jihad* is to encounter unyielding resistance. It would be wise, then, for Israel and its Western allies to put up such resistance.

But from reading Mr. Kramer's article, I think I note a slight chink in the armor through which an Islamic Trojan Horse could penetrate the Israeli wall, namely, the PLO. Mr. Kramer excludes from the circle of Islamic fundamentalists "some elements of the PLO," which, he suggests, "have grudgingly accepted the reality of the Jewish state." In this I believe he is mistaken.

I say this because the PLO is the Islamic world's weapon to enlist secular forces against Israel. The goal of the PLO is the same as that of Hamas and other fundamentalists: the total destruction of Israel. The two groups merely constitute different ways to achieve this goal. Look at what the existence of the so-called "secular" PLO accomplishes for Islam:

1. It disguises *jihad* and enables it to appear in secular form. . . .

2. It promotes the illusion that an accommodation with the Palestinian Arabs along secular lines is possible. If it were known that the

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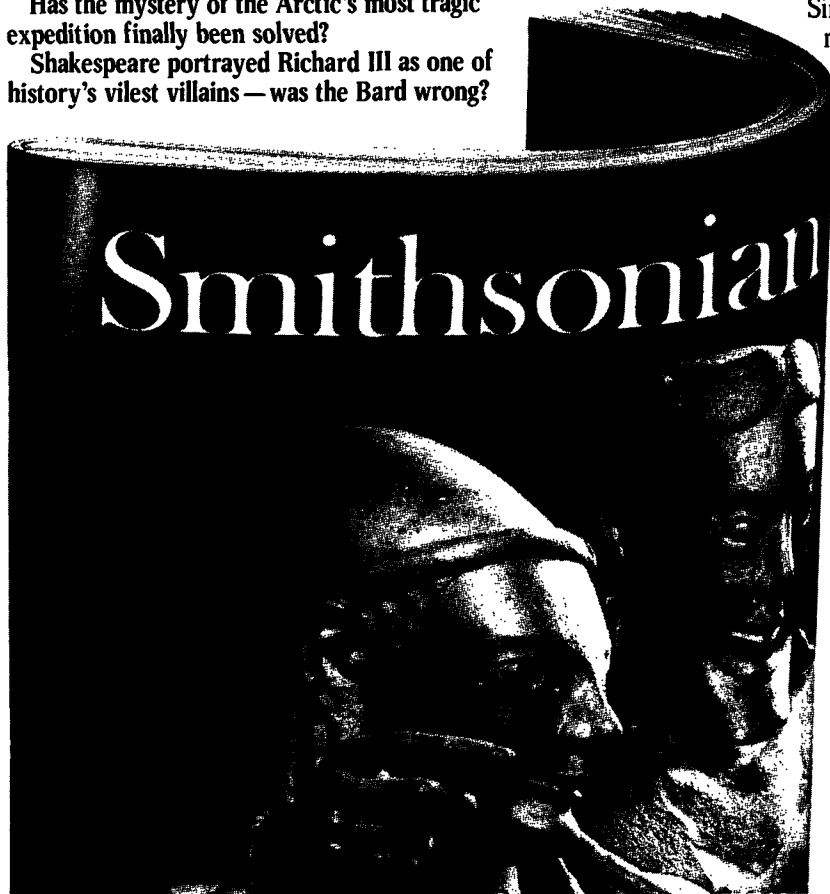
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conflict is a religious one and that no compromise is possible, Muslims might lose world support. . . .

3. A "secular" PLO enables Christian sects hostile to Israel to get into the act without having openly to support the aims of another religion.

. . . It is time to wake up and expose the farce of PLO secularism before it is too late.

DAVID BASCH
West Hartford, Connecticut

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

Martin Kramer's benign conclusion that, perhaps—just perhaps—the fundamentalism overtaking the Islamic world will somehow fade away, seems to belie the body of his careful analysis that it will not. . . .

Though we have before us the example of the sudden liberalizing and liberating of the former Soviet empire, which took almost everyone by surprise, we also have the much more common examples of revolutions which have led to more autocratic states.

As Mr. Kramer implies—who knows? But since there isn't any Islamic Gorbachev or de Klerk on

the scene, it's probably best to keep our powder dry.

FREDERIC WILE
New York City

MARTIN KRAMER writes:

I am perplexed by David Basch's argument that the PLO should be situated in the circle of Islamic fundamentalism. The PLO is of the same vintage as Algeria's FLN, and now faces a similar challenge by a fundamentalist opposition: the media darlings of Hamas. The PLO may not be secular by Western standards, but it is by the increasingly Islamized standards of the contemporary Middle East. The countless defectors to Hamas do not regard the PLO's secularism as a farce. Nor do they regard the PLO's policy of sending a Christian woman to concede most of Islamic Palestine to the Jews as a clever "Islamic plan." On the contrary, they are certain the Jews will rout the Palestinian delegation and the Arab states in Washington.

This is because any "peace" with Israel would necessarily involve some sort of "normalization." According to the fundamentalists, the Jews would give up insignifi-

cant territory in order to put the entire region under a cultural and economic occupation. Israeli hegemony would then extend from the Nile to the Euphrates. The actual "Islamic plan," then, is the opposite of that suggested by Mr. Basch: it is predicated on unyielding struggle, and absolute rejection of the PLO's decision to negotiate.

As for the PLO, it does include some who see the peace process as war (even *jihad*) by other means. If I wrote that some elements of the PLO accept the reality of Israel, then clearly some elements do not. If I wrote that the spirit of that acceptance has been grudging, then obviously it is fragile. And acceptance of the reality of Israel is far from recognition of its legitimacy. Still, Israel's proven strength has brought its enemies to the table. Provided Israel emerges from the present negotiations even stronger, there is every chance that this acceptance will grow. Obviously the elements which constitute Israeli strength are a matter for debate. But I trust Mr. Basch will agree that this issue should be decided by the people and government of Israel.

I apologize to Frederic Wile for drawing too subtle a conclusion. Let me be explicit. I did not argue that Islamic fundamentalism will "somehow fade away." But I did deny the fundamentalists' own claim that their triumph is inevitable. Fundamentalism can be contained provided the West supports the friends of stability and pluralism in Muslim lands. And while I dismissed the view that Islamic fundamentalism is a fad, I did describe it as a generational surge, borne on the shoulders of the disaffected young. The surge will subside in time, unless soft thinking allows it to acquire power, as in Iran. In that case, both the West and the unfortunate peoples of the region will be saddled with it for generations to come.

Since publication of my article, it has transpired that U.S. embassies in the Middle East conducted a dialogue with several fundamentalist movements, including Hamas. The U.S. supposedly wished to be better informed. But the very conduct of dialogue needlessly rewarded the fundamentalists, who continued and even accelerated their incitement of violence against U.S. policy. It raised doubts about American judgment

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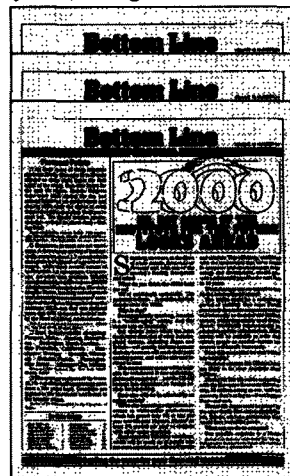
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among friends and allies. And it suggested that the U.S. has insufficient independent sources of information about these movements. As usual, the real danger is not that our powder might get wet. It is that we ourselves might recklessly ignite it.

Poetry as Sanctuary

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

Thank you for Christopher Clausen's review of *Can Poetry Matter?* by Dana Gioia [Books in Review, February].

It is true, as Mr. Clausen notes, that most contemporary poetry is written for, and about, other poets. It is also true that poetry "grows out of a narrower range of experience than in the past," namely, the life that revolves around creative-writing courses in English departments.

But why must this situation always be lamented? Poetry will never again have the same role that it held before the novel, movies, and TV. But it has developed into a forum, a sanctuary if you will, for pursuing a kind of aesthetic and spiritual self-help, and, in its workshop form, group therapy. . . .

Why is it assumed that poets really *want* to reach a wider audience? It is the subculture that provides their livelihood, their companions and muses. It is not in their best interest to address the general public; the point is to preserve the secret language of the enclave. Poets seek only one another, a network of contemplatives offering an alternative world. This is not necessarily bad; it is simply the result of a natural process of evolution. Why not accept it as such?

KAREN WHITEHILL
Charlottesville, Virginia

The Voice of NPR

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

Andrea Levin's "The Voice of NPR" [Israel Watch, January] is a masterpiece of reporting based on meticulous research. Her comments are congruent with my own observations. . . . Listening to National Public Radio [NPR] while driving, . . . I inevitably become enraged by its derogatory reporting about Israel and its anti-Israel slant concerning events in the Middle East. It is a miracle that

there have been no automobile accidents as a result of my reactions to these broadcasts.

I have tried calling NPR to talk to individual reporters and even to higher-ups, but . . . I was never even given the courtesy of a return phone call. . . .

I have also called two popular NPR programs, *Morning Edition* and *All Things Considered*, even though I knew my calls would never be aired. I wrote to both programs on several occasions and never received an answer. . . .

I think the personnel at NPR are not in the least embarrassed by their lack of professional integrity, nor do they care about the public that is helping to support them. . . . I see no reason why such unmitigated and unabashed hatred should be permitted to continue with public funds.

SHELDON F. GOTTLIEB
Mobile, Alabama

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

I am always perplexed at the hostile attitude of the liberal establishment toward the sole outpost of democracy in the Middle East. Andrea Levin's lucid, dispassionate presentation documents one facet of this hostility, although she has not undertaken an analysis of underlying motives.

Equally perplexing is the attitude of the Jewish community. My local (Philadelphia) public-broadcasting station, WHYY, offers programs of Jewish interest at fund-raising time. . . . Throughout the remainder of the year, however, WHYY faithfully airs NPR programming and refuses to accept any responsibility for the anti-Israel content of these shows; in fact, WHYY regularly manages to present some anti-Israel gems of its own. Several of my efforts to bring this issue to the attention of local Jewish activist organizations have met with indifference. More appalling, ads have been run on WHYY by the Jewish Federation of Philadelphia supporting the station's fund-raising campaign.

Why does the Jewish community accept this continuing, damaging hostility so passively?

JONAS BRACHFELD
Moorestown, New Jersey

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

. . . The response of National Public Radio to CAMERA's protest about its Middle East coverage was "to concede only that it had made

a few minor factual errors." But what about NPR's misuse of "facts" and its omission of information favorable to Israel or unfavorable to its adversaries?

Mrs. Levin cites NPR's statutory mandate of "strict adherence to objectivity and balance in all programs or series of a controversial nature." News programs should not in fact be "controversial," but NPR's biased programming has made them so.

Mrs. Levin characterizes NPR as "America's prime tax-supported radio network." . . . Unless there is a good prospect for effective oversight of NPR's exercise of its mandate, government contributions should cease. At present the name "National Public Radio" gives the impression that it is complying with its mandate.

SUE GOLDEN LERNER
Jerusalem, Israel

ANDREA LEVIN writes:

Sheldon F. Gottlieb's frustrated effort to communicate to NPR officials his dissatisfaction with the network's programming is mirrored in the experiences of many. Recent statements by NPR president Douglas Bennet indicate a seemingly disdainful attitude toward the public and an openly defiant approach to measures aimed at bringing the network into compliance with its legal mandate to provide "strict adherence to objectivity and balance" in controversial programming. Bennet denounced important new reform proposals by the Corporation for Public Broadcasting [CPB], the entity that oversees and channels funds to public networks. Commenting on the new CPB measures designed to assess citizen views about network programming, to review such programming for objectivity and balance, and to initiate redress where necessary, Bennet said: "NPR will not run remedial programming and will not respond to editorial judgments other than our own." Bennet averred that program review would have a "chilling effect" on producers and is "a highly sensitive issue of fundamental First Amendment importance."

As we have seen all too often, news outlets which have enormous power to determine the content of information reaching the American public, but which are accountable to no one, like to cast public demands for fuller, more respon-

sible, and more balanced coverage as assaults on free speech. The First Amendment, needless to say, was not enacted to protect media industries, but to protect individual Americans who have a constitutional right to complain, to challenge, and to demand better performance by journalists and executives, most particularly, perhaps, by those whose salaries are paid by the taxpayer.

The muted reaction of some in the Jewish community to NPR's biased Middle East coverage—Jonas Brachfeld's concern—is in part an indication of the need to educate the public about the seriousness of the problem. But Jewish discontent with NPR seems now to be widespread and growing, especially among those who tune in regularly. Community action, concerted and continuous, at the level of the local affiliate station is vital; affiliates purchase NPR programming and may acquire material from some of the smaller, competing networks if they so choose.

Sue Golden Lerner raises a very interesting question related to NPR's dependence on government funds. Douglas Bennet declared in a nationwide NPR telecast on March 11, 1993, that the "most important thing I've done is to lead the charge in ending direct funding for NPR. We get no funding from the Corporation for Public Broadcasting." It is true that Bennet helped reroute much of NPR's government funding, which had previously moved in lump sums directly from CPB to the network. Nevertheless, Bennet's comments, suggesting some new financial in-

dependence from tax dollars and perhaps some more tenuous relation to the statutes calling for objectivity and balance, are deceptive on two counts. First, NPR is, according to recent IRS accounts, currently still receiving something over \$14 million in direct government funds for a new satellite system. Second, the millions in Community Service Grants channeled from CPB to more than 400 affiliate stations, which are not technically earmarked to be spent for NPR programs, are, in fact, used in large measure to buy NPR programming. NPR is heavily taxpayer-supported, whether the check is written to NPR directly or is passed through local affiliates first. Indeed, the network spent nearly a quarter of a million dollars lobbying Congress in fiscal year 1991 to assure that taxpayer largesse continues to flow into NPR coffers.

The Pope & Communism

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

I am grateful to Arch Puddington, himself a stalwart ally of the forces of freedom during the cold war, for his thoughtful review of my book, *The Final Revolution: The Resistance Church and the Collapse of Communism* [Books in Review, March]. I should like, however, to correct what may be a misimpression of my views—and, far more importantly, of Pope John Paul II's understanding of his ministry.

The question has to do with whether John Paul understood himself to be the instrument chosen by Providence "to lead the Church

in the final struggle against Communism," as Mr. Puddington put it. If I may quote briefly from *The Final Revolution*:

Did John Paul II receive the pallium of the bishop of Rome on October 22, 1978, convinced that he was God's chosen instrument for dismantling the Yalta imperial system? The answer to the question, put that way, is almost certainly, "No." Why? Because John Paul would not have conceived his ministry primarily, or even secondarily, in those terms. What we can discern from the public record, read against the background of his life, is a deep conviction that the election of a Slavic and Polish pope was an expression of God's purposes in history; that his primary task was to "strengthen the brethren"; and that doing that would involve a persistent defense of basic human rights, especially the right of religious freedom.

But John Paul also seemed to sense that, precisely by being a vigorous pastor, he could have an impact on the politics of nations. . . . He was determined to lead, out of a deep sense of vocational responsibility and a deep conviction that God had put him where he was precisely so that he could say, again and again, "Be not afraid!"

So he would lead. . . .

And, as Mr. Puddington so rightly notes, that moral leadership had an enormous impact (largely unappreciated in the West) on the Communist crack-up.

GEORGE WEIGEL
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Clintonism Unmasked

Irwin M. Stelzer

AMERICA is in the early days of a revolution—more precisely, a counterrevolution—and seems not even to know it. Indeed, much of the intellectual energy being poured into the battle over President Bill Clinton's tax-and-spend proposals is being wasted on purely peripheral arguments. Is raising the taxable portion of Social-Security income to be regarded as a tax increase or a spending reduction? Is allocating money for the inoculation of children to be counted as new spending or as an "investment"? Will higher taxes reduce consumption and jobs, or lower the deficit and interest rates, thereby stimulating consumption and creating jobs?

These questions have the charm of being almost unanswerable with any confidence, and the added attraction that, in years to come, so many forces will be operating on the economy simultaneously that no one will ever know who was right in the first place. But discussing such issues is far from harmless. For it directs attention away from what the Clinton budget tells us about this new administration's fundamental socioeconomic plans for America, its vision of the future, the legacy that it would like to become known as Clintonism.

It will, perhaps, be useful to make two things clear at the outset. First, what is about to happen to America's economy and its society will be the result of a genuine team effort between Bill Clinton and Hillary Rodham Clinton. Billary—as the First Couple is now widely called—is not a two-headed horse, trying to move Left and Right either simultaneously or alternately, depending on whether the President or his wife has the whip hand. It is a well-trained, unidirectional steed, headed Left with the blessing of both partners, at a speed negotiated between them. One partner may be more interested in economic change, the other in a radical reordering of society, but their interests intersect and coincide: they do not clash.

Thus, Clinton's first act as President was to appoint the most socially radical cabinet his wife could propose; his second was to issue an execu-

tive order approving the use of federal funds to facilitate abortions; his third was to take on the military and Senator Sam Nunn by ordering an end to policies restricting the presence of homosexuals in the military. These moves were followed by efforts to raise taxes on the rich, especially millionaires; to expand the role of government in the economy; to force lower prices on health-care providers and pharmaceutical companies; and to set de-facto quotas aimed at increasing the presence of women, minorities, and gays at all levels of government.

Whether or not one agrees with these actions is of less importance than the fact that they are undeniably not the acts of a moderate, seeking to keep his wife-led Left in check. They are the acts of a daring radical, prepared to gamble that he can, in the end, sell his program to enough people to survive the voters' scrutiny in 1996.

A second requirement of a serious analysis of Clintonism is a realistic attitude toward Hillary Rodham Clinton, social engineer, the force that has replaced Mrs. Bill Clinton, the cookie baker of the campaign trail. To say that Mrs. Clinton was not elected, and therefore should not have an active role in policy, is to ask the President to arrange his household in a way few contemporary men can arrange theirs. It also ignores both historical precedent and what will undoubtedly be the order of things in administrations to come, including conservative ones.

The objection to Hillary is, or should be, not that she is unelected and unaccountable (if she messes up the health-care system she may indeed be held accountable by voters who can send her, together with her husband, back to Arkansas). It is not that she has been given power, but rather the uses to which she intends to put that power which ought to concern critics of the Clinton administration.

Actually, conservative whining about Hillary is extraordinarily useful to Bill, permitting him to continue camouflaging his own deep ideological commitment to radical change. One reason the President is undisturbed by the charge that, in the words of the *Spectator* of London, he has gone "beyond the bounds of reasonable political opportunism" in breaking so many campaign promises, is that this charge conveniently con-

IRWIN M. STELZER is director of Regulatory Policy Studies at the American Enterprise Institute and U.S. economic and political columnist for the *London Sunday Times* and the *Boston Herald*.

ceals the pattern in the promises broken—and those kept.

Thus, the pledge not to raise taxes on the middle class is dropped, the promise to implement the gay-rights agenda is fulfilled; the pledge not to increase spending is forgotten, the promise to end the so-called abortion gag rule is upheld; the pledge not to tax gasoline proves to have been written in sand, the promise to impose a strict quota system on appointees, regardless of competence, to have been cast in concrete.

IN SHORT, this is not a pragmatist bowing to political reality. This is an ideologue who denied his true intentions in order to win office. Now that he is “unmasking himself,” as the *Spectator* puts it, he looks more like Ronald Reagan than George Bush in the sense that he has the “vision thing”—in spades. Not surprising for a man who has traveled an intellectual road marked out for him by several economists and political scientists resident in universities from Cambridge, Massachusetts to Berkeley, California. Some of them influenced him directly: they had and have his ear. Others, although more remote from the scene, contributed to an intellectual climate receptive to the philosophy on which Clinton now relies.

The core of that philosophy, the element around which all else is assembled, is a collectivist faith in the state as the source and fount of economic vitality and social health. Clinton and his mentors have little time for the exaltation of the self-reliant individual that was central to Reagan's philosophy. Indeed, one of his closest and most influential advisers, Robert Reich, late of Harvard University's John F. Kennedy School of Government and now Secretary of Labor, has placed “The Triumphant Individual” among this nation's enduring “myths.”

As Reich defines it in his book, *Tales of a New America* (1987), this is the myth that “the little guy who works hard, takes risks, believes in himself” will eventually succeed in America. While conceding that “there is definitely something” to the notion that daring entrepreneurs are a key ingredient of America's past economic success, Reich argues that we have entered an age of “collective entrepreneurialism.” In this new age we need not fear that excessive taxation will deprive entrepreneurs of the capital or of the incentive to use their superior skill to direct it to the best opportunities.

In a later book, *The Power of Public Ideas* (1988), Reich pushes his collectivism a bit further:

The core responsibility of those who deal in public policy—elected officials, administrators, policy analysts—is not simply to discover as objectively as possible what people want for themselves and then to determine and implement the best means of satisfying these wants.

Rather, he writes, these “preexisting selfish preferences” must take a back seat to “what is good for society.” A louder clarion call to reengineer society, no matter what its individual members may wish, would be difficult to find.

The same collectivist bent appears in the work of still another contributor to the Clinton intellectual inventory, Lester Thurow, dean of the Sloan School of Management at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology. In his recent *Head to Head: The Coming Economic Battle Among Japan, Europe, and America* (1992), Thurow starts from a premise echoed frequently by Clinton himself during the campaign: “The American system as it is now formulated is not working.” Thurow then proceeds to argue that “the individualistic Anglo-Saxon British-American form of capitalism” must be scuppered in favor of “communitarian” capitalism. If we are to restore America's competitiveness, we must rely on “business groups” and “teamwork” rather than on “the brilliant entrepreneur, Nobel Prize-winners . . . , individual responsibility . . . , and the Lone Ranger.”

From this infatuation with the collective as against the individual, all else flows. Individual consumption is frivolous and to be discouraged; resources should be diverted to government infrastructure projects. Individuals should give up the privacy of their automobiles for the collective enjoyment of mass transit. More of each individual's income should be commandeered by the state, for deployment in public rather than private interests.

This is a vision that represents a direct repudiation of Reaganism, and even of George Bush's mutated variant of that ideology. As Clinton and his mentors see it, the prosperity of the Reagan era was phony, depending on excessive and unsustainable government and private borrowing; on the enrichment of a few at the expense of the many; on paper profits made by greedy takeover artists intent on destroying America's great (and highly unionized) industrial companies; and on the subversion of American “competitiveness” by too little investment in infrastructure and too much spending on selfish consumption.

YET the plain truth is that the prosperity of the Reagan era, far from being phony, was unparalleled in its reach. The 92-month expansion presided over by Reagan was three times longer than the average post-1919 economic recovery; it resulted in close to twenty million new jobs; and (as Robert L. Bartley of the *Wall Street Journal* has pointed out) it added to real GNP the equivalent of the entire 1982 West German economy.

Along with this went an amazing degree of economic mobility—in both directions. On the top end, half of the companies on the *Fortune* 500 list when Reagan took office had been displaced by 1990. On the lower end, the mean in-

come of the poorest 20 percent of households rose by 5 percent—in real terms—during the 1980's; half the people who started the decade in the lowest group had moved up to a higher one by 1990; and median black household income rose 84 percent between 1980 and 1989, while white household income rose 68 percent. In the 1980's, concludes Glen Hubbard, then Deputy Assistant Secretary for Tax Analysis, "the poor grew much richer and the rich only a little richer."

And the rich paid their taxes, despite (or because of) lower marginal rates. Larry Lindsey of the Federal Reserve Board estimates that the top 1 percent of American families paid \$50.2 billion more in taxes in 1988 than in 1981, while the remaining 99 percent paid \$5 billion less.

All this while winning the cold war, thereby bequeathing to Clinton an enormous peace dividend, and maintaining our position as the world's largest exporter. Joseph Nye of Harvard calculates that America now accounts for about 25 percent of world product—almost the same share it held in the mid-1960's, and in 1938, and even in 1900. Only in the period immediately following World War II, when Europe and Japan were in ruins, did America's share soar to the levels that present-day protectionists use as a target.

Nor is it true that the mix of what we produce has shown a nasty tendency to emphasize low-value goods and commodities—the so-called "nation of hamburger flippers" that upsets the President as he munches his Big Mac. According to Andrew Warner, staff economist at the Federal Reserve Board, capital goods such as computers and industrial machinery now amount to 38 percent of total manufactures, up from 28 percent in 1967. Exports of capital goods have risen to 4 percent of our gross domestic product (GDP), compared with only 1.4 percent in the late 1960's. In the end, America remains the world's largest exporter of aircraft, agricultural and industrial chemicals, office and computing machines, and engines; and we are second in electrical machinery, plastics, and (legal) drugs. We lead in semiconductors, and have guessed right where Japan has guessed wrong on High-Definition (HD) TV technology.

Nor is our position under serious threat. Contrary to what one might imagine from listening to the complaints of Clinton and his mentors, productivity in U.S. manufacturing rose by 55 percent between 1980 and 1991, compared with gains of less than 40 percent in Germany and Japan. And a full-time American worker produced \$49,600 worth of goods and services in 1990, compared with the \$44,200 and the \$38,200 produced by his German and Japanese counterparts, respectively.

Little wonder that America's standard of living remains the envy of the world, and particularly of the Japanese to whom we are supposedly losing

the international trade war. Americans have more than one car for every two people, the Japanese fewer than one for every four. We have 20 percent more telephones and 40 percent more TV sets per capita than the Japanese. Newly built houses in America average more than 2,000 square feet; a Japanese family moving into a newly built house (older ones are smaller) must squeeze into half that space. Americans also have more parks, shorter travel-to-work times, and more leisure facilities than do the Japanese.

DENYING the success of Reaganism, however, is an essential ingredient of Clintonism, for if America is not in decline, there is nothing to reverse: counterrevolutionaries need not apply. Hence declinism became and remains a Clinton theme, and the counterrevolution has been launched. Its economic outlines are now well-known: increase taxes on the rich; hit the middle class with an energy tax loosely based on the heat content of various fuels; raise corporate taxes; introduce a host of new social-spending programs; cut defense spending a lot and the cost of running the government a little. If this program is enacted, it will result, in dollar terms, in the largest tax increase in American history.

The spoonful of sugar that is supposed to make this medicine go down is deficit reduction. Yet it is now obvious to all but the most naive Clintonistas that the deficit is more likely to rise than to fall, despite further tax increases, and especially when Hillary's 500 advisers present their health-care bill to the nation later this year.

This should be unsurprising, given the fact that the so-called "deficit hawks" in the administration are led by the Secretary of the Treasury, Lloyd Bentsen, and the Budget Director, Leon Panetta. Both of these men, when in Congress, helped bring about the huge increases in spending in the past decade, and (along with their Bush-administration predecessors Richard Darman and Nicholas Brady) were involved in the six budget deals that preceded each ratcheting-up of the deficit. Such hawks as these are not likely to strike fear into the allegedly more spendthrift doves, who anyhow outnumber them in access to the President and in intellectual firepower.

This firepower is provided by a bevy of Nobel Prize-winning economists and hundreds of their acolytes. They know that the mask of prudent deficit reduction will soon fall from the face of Clintonism, if it has not already done so, and that not even the record tax increases so far proposed will provide sufficient funds to balance the budget, even when tax revenues are swelled by an economic recovery.

Consequently, they have developed two new, interlocking notions. The first is that stepped-up government spending and high deficits—which are generally accepted as good medicine for an

economy in recession—are also justified by “slow growth.” The second is that deficits incurred through “investments” are more benign than those resulting from spending on current needs.

“Slow growth,” of course, is very much in the eye of the beholder. When the economy was thought to be growing at an annual rate of 2 percent, Clinton proclaimed that this was not good enough. Three percent was also not good enough. Nor, it seems, was the 4.8-percent growth rate of the last quarter of 1992. The upshot is that John Maynard Keynes’s prescription for balanced budgets—indeed, for surpluses—during periods of economic growth has been transmuted into a policy of achieving balance only during periods of very rapid expansion, if then, with the growth rate that justifies such balance an ever-increasing target. This new approach leaves Clinton where he wants to be, in a position to propose so-called expansionary stimulus packages—in other words, new social programs—even when the economy is already growing at a pace adequate by historic standards.

Any flexibility denied by this approach is provided by the distinction between “investment” and mere spending. Yale’s James Tobin has advised a receptive President that “investment in business capital, new technology, public infrastructure, and, above all, in the education, skills, and health of children and adults” is appropriate, even if it swells the current deficit—temporarily, he would argue.

Here we have an important justification for much of the Clinton economic program. For nothing the President has so far proposed and is likely to get—not the tax increases, not the defense cuts—can provide enough money to fund the bullet trains, roads, and fiber-optic networks he wants to build, or supply enough dollars for the health-care, job-training, and inner-cities programs to which he is pledged. Even more tax increases, likely anyhow to be sopped up by health-care reform, will not do the trick, at least not alone, and certainly not when it becomes apparent that many of Clinton’s proposed spending cuts—a freeze in federal employees’ pay, along with reductions in farm subsidies, in the Rural Electrification Administration, and in Congress’s administrative costs—will never be realized. So the deficit will go up—but this will now be justified as a function of “investments.”

THIS two-pronged theory—that it is proper to stimulate the economy even when it is growing, and that most spending programs can be reclassified as investments—removes almost all budgetary constraints on the Clinton team. That freedom is offset, at least at the moment, by Clinton’s need to keep an eye on Ross Perot and his followers with their fixation on deficit reduction. But as the economy continues to grow—for which Clinton will claim un-

deserved credit—and as the coalition he is putting together takes form and provides a firmer base of support for more and more government spending, deficit reduction will recede into the background.

The Clinton coalition will be built the old-fashioned political way—by handing out money, much as old-line city pols doled out turkeys at Christmas. Remember: Clinton will have two large revenue sources at his disposal—the ability to run deficits, rationalized by his policy of perpetually stimulating the economy, and the rising stream of funds that will come from the tax increases he has proposed and will propose in the future.

The latter source is, for Clinton and the Democrats, the more important. For it is the key that can unlock the cell in which Ronald Reagan had imprisoned them. By cutting taxes, raising defense spending, and running large deficits, Reagan left the Democrats with no money to do what they do best—introduce new social programs, or expand old ones. Instead, they had to propose either tax increases (as Walter Mondale did in his 1984 presidential campaign), or cuts in the programs they so dearly loved. Since the electorate simply would not vote for more taxes to fund more spending, the Democrats had little to offer.

Clinton broke out of that trap by proposing new taxes not for additional spending but to reduce the deficit—thereby implicitly promising to use the money in the interests of “our” children and grandchildren, rather than doling it out to “them” (the poor and the minorities) in the form of new social programs. Then, in the manner of a three-card monte dealer on New York’s Fifth Avenue, Clinton moved the money around to fund the new social programs, creatively relabeled “investments.” The net result: higher taxes and more domestic spending now, a hoped-for reduction in the deficit later.

All this forms part of what the American Enterprise Institute’s William Schneider calls Clinton’s “majoritarian strategy,” an effort to put together a coalition of groups that have one thing in common—they are looking for help from the government. Here Clinton’s counterrevolutionary thrust becomes especially evident. For the Reagan coalition, as Schneider observes, was composed of interests that wanted the government to do less—that wanted lower taxes, less regulation, less judicial activism. The emerging Clinton coalition, by contrast, is made up of groups that want government to do more: businessmen who want research subsidies, trade protection, and a supportive “industrial policy”; social activists who want government endorsement of their agenda of abortion-on-demand, gay rights, and the redefinition of “the family”; and poor people who want higher benefits.

Which leaves the middle class, the group that,

in the end, controls elections, pays the taxes, uses the roads, and holds down most jobs. This large and diverse population probably seeks greater job security, better health care, and mortgages with non-punishing interest rates. If Clinton gives them some reasonable portion of those things, they may forgive him the tax increases.

BUT what about the most crucial aspect of Clintonism: its social agenda? For Clintonism is more, much more, than Clintonomics. Indeed, Clintonomics may prove the least durable of the President's legacies. As Reagan demonstrated, the economic policy of even decades can be reversed by a determined successor.

Not so a social agenda like Clinton's. Irving Kristol, the editor of the *Public Interest*, says that conservatives had lost the culture war before Clinton replaced Bush, that the children of the radical 1960's had captured the academy and the media before the Clintons and their mentors, themselves products of that stormy decade, captured the White House. Their goal is to consolidate the victory they have won, and to extend and institutionalize the great change in social attitudes that grew out of the radical movement of the 60's by placing the state with all its resources and coercive power on the side of feminists, homosexuals, minorities, and the various beneficiaries of the welfare state. This will be done by executive order where possible, by legislation where necessary, and by a newly activist judiciary to which the Clintons will make hundreds of appointments over the next few years.

The middle class will undoubtedly find some of this offensive, but its opposition—so the Clintons hope—will be muted by the compensating benefits of better job security and health care. The business community may find some of this costly—parental leave, day care, and training programs are not cheap—but the Clintons are gambling that business will accept the burden in return for protection from foreign competition and judiciously dispensed subsidies. The Perot crowd, if it holds together, may find some of this incomprehensible, but the calculation is that it will go along so long as Clinton symbolically trims a few government programs.

This is a coherent program, backed by a workable political strategy. If realized, it will produce a redistribution of resources from the private to the public sector; a redistribution of income from high earners and, I suspect, the middle class, to the poor; an increase in government regulation of economic life including, at least in the case of health care, price controls and rationing; an increase in the costs imposed on businesses, with a parallel increase in efforts to protect them from international competition; and a change in societal attitudes toward groups now only marginally acceptable, and toward so-called "alternative lifestyles."

Those who wish to resist these changes face no easy chore. A recitation of the achievements of the Reagan revolution seems, these days, to have more meaning to the reciter than to his audience. For the media have succeeded in defining the Reagan era as one of greed, debt, inequality, and failure—in good part because George Bush stood silent in the face of such criticism, mistakenly assuming that he could enhance his own stature by diminishing that of his predecessor. General attacks on "too much government" and "high taxes" do not carry much weight, either: whereas Reagan persuaded people that government was the problem, Clinton seems on the way to persuading them that it is the solution.

Most importantly, Clinton has couched his program in language with which it is difficult to quarrel on a purely conceptual basis. (Certainly, government investments that have high social returns should be made. Surely, training programs that markedly increase lifetime productivity and earnings are in the nation's interest.) Moreover, insights of the sort that laid the basis for the neoconservative movement and the Reagan revolution have been shrewdly coopted by the Clinton counterrevolution, which speaks the language of incentives for private enterprise, efficiency in government, and the need for policies that preserve families even as it embarks on programs to enhance the public sector, bloat the government, and further remove responsibility from individuals and families.

For the serious conservative opposition, it will be a tough four years.

Immigrants and Family Values

Francis Fukuyama

AT THE Republican convention in Houston last August, Patrick J. Buchanan announced the coming of a block-by-block war to "take back our culture." Buchanan is right that a cultural war is upon us, and that this fight will be a central American preoccupation now that the cold war is over. What he understands less well, however, is that the vast majority of the non-European immigrants who have come into this country in the past couple of decades are not the enemy. Indeed, many of them are potentially on his side.

Conservatives have for long been sharply divided on the question of immigration. Many employers and proponents of free-market economics, like Julian Simon or the editorial page of the *Wall Street Journal*, are strongly pro-immigration; they argue for open borders because immigrants are a source of cheap labor and ultimately create more wealth than they consume. Buchanan and other traditional right-wing Republicans, by contrast, represent an older nativist position. They dispute the economic benefits of immigration, but more importantly look upon immigrants as bearers of foreign and less desirable cultural values. It is this group of conservatives who forced the inclusion of a plank in the Republican platform last August calling for the creation of "structures" to maintain the integrity of America's southern border.

Indeed, hostility to immigration has made for peculiar bedfellows. The Clinton administration's difficulties in finding an attorney general who had not at some point hired an illegal-immigrant babysitter is testimony to the objective dependence of liberal yuppies on immigration to maintain their life-styles, and they by and large would support the *Wall Street Journal's* open-borders position.

On the other hand, several parts of the liberal coalition—blacks and environmentalists—have been increasingly vocal in recent years in opposition to further immigration, particularly from Latin America. The Black Leadership Forum, headed by Coretta Scott King and Congressman Walter Fauntroy, has lobbied to maintain sanc-

tions against employers hiring illegal immigrant labor on the ground that this takes away jobs from blacks and "legal" browns. Jack Miles, a former *Los Angeles Times* book-review editor with impeccable liberal credentials, has in a recent article in the *Atlantic* lined up with the Federation for American Immigration Reform (FAIR) in calling for a rethinking of open borders, while liberal activist groups like the Southern California Interfaith Task Force on Central America have supported Senator Orrin Hatch's legislation strengthening employer sanctions. Environmental groups like the Sierra Club, for their part, oppose immigration because it necessitates economic growth, use of natural resources, and therefore environmental degradation.

But if much of the liberal opposition to immigration has focused on economic issues, the conservative opposition has concentrated on the deeper cultural question; and here the arguments made by the Right are very confused. The symptoms of cultural decay are all around us, but the last people in the world we should be blaming are recent immigrants.

II

THE most articulate and reasoned recent conservative attack on immigration came last summer in an article in *National Review* by Peter Brimelow. Brimelow, a senior editor at *Forbes* and himself a naturalized American of British and Canadian background, argues that immigration worked in the past in America only because earlier waves of nativist backlash succeeded in limiting it to a level that could be successfully assimilated into the dominant Anglo-Saxon American culture. Brimelow criticizes pro-immigration free-marketeers like Julian Simon for ignoring the issue of the skill levels of the immigrant labor force, and their likely impact on blacks and others at the bottom end of the economic ladder. But his basic complaint is a cultural one. Attacking the *Wall Street Journal's* Paul Gigot for remarking that a million Zulus would probably work harder than a million Englishmen today, Brimelow notes:

This comment reveals an utter innocence about the reality of ethnic and cultural differ-

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ences, let alone little things like tradition and history—in short, the greater part of the conservative vision. Even in its own purblind terms, it is totally false. All the empirical evidence is that immigrants from developed countries assimilate better than those from underdeveloped countries. It is developed countries that teach the skills required for success in the United States . . . it should not be necessary to explain that the legacy of [the Zulu kings] Shaka and Cetewayo—overthrown just over a century ago—is not that of Alfred the Great, let alone Elizabeth II or any civilized society.

Elsewhere, Brimelow suggests that culture is a key determinant of economic performance, and that people from certain cultures are therefore likely to do less well economically than others. He implies, furthermore, that some immigrants are more prone to random street crime because of their “impulsiveness and present-orientation,” while others are responsible for organized crime which is, by his account, ethnically based. Finally, Brimelow argues that the arrival of diverse non-European cultures fosters the present atmosphere of multiculturalism, and is, to boot, bad for the electoral prospects of the Republican party.

A similar line of thought runs through Buchanan’s writings and speeches, and leads to a similar anti-immigrant posture. Buchanan has explicitly attacked the notion that democracy represents a particularly positive form of government, and hence would deny that belief in universal democratic principles ought to be at the core of the American national identity.¹ But if one subtracts democracy from American nationality, what is left? Apparently, though Buchanan is somewhat less explicit on this point, a concept of America as a Christian, ethnically European nation with certain core cultural values that are threatened by those coming from other cultures and civilizations.

THERE is an easy, Civics 101-type answer to the Brimelow-Buchanan argument. In contrast to other West European democracies, or Japan, the American national identity has never been directly linked to ethnicity or religion. Nationality has been based instead on universal concepts like freedom and equality that are in theory open to all people. Our Constitution forbids the establishment of religion, and the legal system has traditionally held ethnicity at arm’s length. To be an American has meant to be committed to a certain set of ideas, and not to be descended from an original tribe of *ur*-Americans. Those elements of a common American culture visible today—belief in the Constitution and the individualist-egalitarian principles underlying it, plus modern American pop and consumer culture—are universally accessible and

appealing, making the United States, in Ben Wattenberg’s phrase, the first “universal nation.”

This argument is correct as far as it goes, but there is a serious counterargument that reaches to the core of last year’s debate over “family values.” It runs as follows:

America began living up to its universalist principles only in the last half of this century. For most of the period from its revolutionary founding to its rise as a great, modern, industrial power, the nation’s elites conceived of the country not just as a democracy based on universal principles, but also as a Christian, Anglo-Saxon nation.

American democracy—the counterargument continues—is, of course, embodied in the laws and institutions of the country, and will be imbibed by anyone who learns to play by its rules. But virtually every serious theorist of American democracy has noted that its success depended heavily on the presence of certain pre-democratic values or cultural characteristics that were neither officially sanctioned nor embodied in law. If the Declaration of Independence and the Constitution were the basis of America’s *Gesellschaft* (society), Christian Anglo-Saxon culture constituted its *Gemeinschaft* (community).

Indeed—the counterargument goes on—the civic institutions that Tocqueville observed in the 1830’s, whose strength and vitality he saw as a critical manifestation of the Americans’ “art of associating,” were more often than not of a religious (i.e., Christian) nature, devoted to temperance, moral education of the young, or the abolition of slavery. There is nothing in the Constitution which states that parents should make large sacrifices for their children, that workers should rise early in the morning and labor long hours in order to get ahead, that people should emulate rather than undermine their neighbors’ success, that they should be innovative, entrepreneurial, or open to technological change. Yet Americans, formed by a Christian culture, possessed these traits in abundance for much of their history, and the country’s economic prosperity and social cohesion arguably rested on them.

It is this sort of consideration that underlay the family-values controversy during last year’s election. Basic to this line of thought is that, all other things being equal, children are better off when raised in stable, two-parent, heterosexual families. Such family structures and the web of moral obligations they entail are the foundation of educational achievement, economic success, good citizenship, personal character, and a host of other social virtues.

The issue of family values was badly mishandled by the Republicans and deliberately misconstrued by the press and the Democrats (often not distinguishable), such that mere mention of the

¹ See, for example, his article, “America First—and Second, and Third,” the *National Interest*, Spring 1990.

phrase provoked derisive charges of narrow-minded gay-bashing and hostility to single mothers. Yet while many Americans did not sign on to last year's family-values theme, few would deny that the family and community are in deep crisis today. The breakdown of the black family in inner-city neighborhoods around America in the past couple of generations shows in particularly stark form the societal consequences of a loss of certain cultural values. And what has happened among blacks is only an extreme extension of a process that has been proceeding apace among whites as well.

The issue, then, is not whether the questions of culture and cultural values are important, or whether it is legitimate to raise them, but whether immigration really threatens those values. For while the values one might deem central either to economic success or to social cohesion may have arisen out of a Christian, Anglo-Saxon culture, it is clear that they are not bound to that particular social group: some groups, like Jews and Asians, might come to possess those values in abundance, while Wasps themselves might lose them and decay. The question thus becomes: which ethnic groups in today's America are threatening, and which groups are promoting, these core cultural values?

III

THE notion that non-European immigrants are a threat to family values and other core American cultural characteristics is, in a way, quite puzzling. After all, the breakdown of traditional family structures, from extended to nuclear, has long been understood to be a disease of advanced industrial countries and not of nations just emerging from their agricultural pasts.

Some conservatives tend to see the third world as a vast, global underclass, teeming with the same social pathologies as Compton in Los Angeles or Bedford-Stuyvesant in Brooklyn. But the sad fact is that the decay of basic social relationships evident in American inner cities, stretching to the most intimate moral bonds linking parents and children, may well be something with few precedents in human history. Economic conditions in most third-world countries simply would not permit a social group suffering so total a collapse of family structure to survive: with absent fathers and no source of income, or mothers addicted to drugs, children would not live to adulthood.

But it would also seem *a priori* likely that third-world immigrants should have stronger family values than white, middle-class, suburban Americans, while their work ethic and willingness to defer to traditional sources of authority should be greater as well. Few of the factors that have led to family breakdown in the American middle class over the past couple of generations—rapidly

changing economic conditions, with their attendant social disruptions; the rise of feminism and the refusal of women to play traditional social roles; or the legitimization of alternative life-styles and consequent proliferation of rights and entitlements on a retail level—apply in third-world situations. Immigrants coming from traditional developing societies are likely to be poorer, less educated, and in possession of fewer skills than those from Europe, but they are also likely to have stronger family structures and moral inhibitions. Moreover, despite the greater ease of moving to America today than in the last century, immigrants are likely to be a self-selecting group with a much greater than average degree of energy, ambition, toughness, and adaptability.

These intuitions are largely borne out by the available empirical data, particularly if one disaggregates the different parts of the immigrant community.

The strength of traditional family values is most evident among immigrants from East and South Asia, where mutually supportive family structures have long been credited as the basis for their economic success. According to Census Bureau statistics, 78 percent of Asian and Pacific Islander households in the United States were family households, as opposed to 70 percent for white Americans. The size of these family households is likely to be larger: 74 percent consist of three or more persons, compared to 57 percent for white families. While Asians are equally likely to be married as whites, they are only half as likely to be divorced.² Though dropping off substantially in the second and third generations, concern for elderly parents is high in Chinese, Japanese, and Vietnamese households; for many, the thought of sticking a mother or father out of sight and out of mind in a nursing home continues to be anathema. More importantly, most of the major Asian immigrant groups are intent on rapid assimilation into the American mainstream, and have not been particularly vocal in pressing for particularistic cultural entitlements.

WHILE most white Americans are ready to recognize and celebrate the social strengths of Asians, the real fears of cultural invasion surround Latinos. Despite their fast growth, Asians still constitute less than 3 percent of the U.S. population, while the number of Hispanics increased from 14.6 to over 22 million between 1980 and 1990, or 9 percent of the population. But here as well, the evidence suggests that most Latin American immigrants may be a source of strength with regard to family values, and not a liability.

Latinos today constitute an extremely diverse group. It is certainly the case that a segment of

² Census Bureau Press Release CB92-89, "Profile of Asians and Pacific Islanders."

the Latino community has experienced many of the same social problems as blacks. This is particularly true of the first large Latino community in the U.S.: Puerto Ricans who came to the mainland in the early postwar period and settled predominantly in New York and other cities of the Northeast. Forty percent of Puerto Rican families are headed by women, compared to 16 percent for the non-Hispanic population; only 57 percent of Puerto Rican households consist of families, while their rate of out-of-wedlock births is almost double the rate for non-Hispanics. In New York, Puerto Ricans have re-exported social pathologies like crack-cocaine use to Puerto Rico over the past generation.

Other Latino groups have also brought social problems with them: the Mariel boat lift from Cuba, during which Castro emptied his country's jails and insane asylums, had a measurable impact on crime in the U.S. Many war-hardened immigrants from El Salvador and other unstable Central American countries have contributed to crime in the U.S., and Chicano gangs in Los Angeles and other Southwestern cities have achieved their own notoriety beside the black Bloods and Crips. Half of those arrested in the Los Angeles riot last year were Latinos.

Such facts are highly visible and contribute to the impression among white Americans that Latinos as a whole have joined inner-city blacks to form one vast, threatening underclass. But there are very significant differences among Latino groups. Latinos of Cuban and Mexican origin, for example, who together constitute 65 percent of the Hispanic community, have a 50-percent lower rate of female-headed households than do Puerto Ricans—18.9 and 19.6 percent versus 38.9 percent. While the rate of Puerto Rican out-of-wedlock births approaches that of blacks (53.0 vs. 63.1 percent of live births), the rates for Cuban and Mexican-origin Latinos are much lower, 16.1 and 28.9 percent, respectively, though they are still above the white rate of 13.9 percent.³

When looked at in the aggregate, Latino family structure stands somewhere between that of whites and blacks. For example, the rates of female-headed families with no husband present as a proportion of total families is 13.5 percent for whites, 46.4 percent for blacks, and 24.4 percent for Hispanics. If we adjust these figures for income level, however, Hispanics turn out to be much closer to the white norm.

Poverty is hard on families regardless of race; part of the reason for the higher percentage of Latino female-headed households is simply that there are more poor Latino families. If we compare families below the poverty level, the Hispanic rate of female-headed families is very close to that of whites (45.7 vs. 43.6 percent), while the comparable rate for blacks is much higher than either (78.3 percent). Considering the substan-

tially higher rate of family breakdown within the sizable Puerto Rican community, this suggests that the rate of single-parent families for Cuban- and Mexican-origin Latinos is actually lower than that for whites at a comparable income level.

Moreover, Latinos as a group are somewhat more likely to be members of families than either whites or blacks.⁴ Another study indicates that Mexican-Americans have better family demographics than do whites, with higher birth-weight babies even among low-income mothers due to taboos on smoking, drinking, and drug use during pregnancy. Many Latinos remain devout Catholics, and the rate of church attendance is higher in the Mexican community than for the U.S. as a whole as well. But even if one does not believe that the United States is a "Christian country," the fact that so many immigrants are from Catholic Latin America should make them far easier to assimilate than, say, Muslims in Europe.

These statistics are broadly in accord with the observations of anyone who has lived in Los Angeles, San Diego, or any other community in the American Southwest. Virtually every early-morning commuter in Los Angeles knows the street-corners on which Chicano day-laborers gather at 7:00 A.M., looking for work as gardeners, busboys, or on construction sites. Many of them are illegal immigrants with families back in Mexico to whom they send their earnings. While they are poor and unskilled, they have a work ethic and devotion to family comparable to those of the South and East European immigrants who came to the U.S. at the turn of the century. It is much less common to see African-Americans doing this sort of thing.

THOSE who fear third-world immigration as a threat to Anglo-American cultural values do not seem to have noticed what the real sources of cultural breakdown have been. To some extent, they can be traced to broad socioeconomic factors over which none of us has control: the fluid, socially disruptive nature of capitalism; technological change; economic pressures of the contemporary workplace and urban life; and so on. But the ideological assault on traditional family values—the sexual revolution; feminism and the delegitimization of the male-dominated household; the celebration of alternative life-styles; attempts ruthlessly to secularize all aspects of American public life; the acceptance of no-fault divorce and the consequent rise of single-parent households—was not the creation of recently-arrived Chicano agricultural workers or Haitian boat people, much less of Chinese or

³ Data taken from Linda Chavez, *Out of the Barrio* (Basic Books, 1991), p. 103.

⁴ Figures taken from *Poverty in the United States: 1991*, Bureau of the Census, Series P-60, no. 181, pp. 7-9; the percentage of people in families for whites, blacks, and Hispanics is 84.5, 84.8, and 89.0, respectively (pp. 2-3).

Korean immigrants. They originated right in the heart of America's well-established white, Anglo-Saxon community. The "Hollywood elite" that created the now celebrated Murphy Brown, much like the establishment "media elite" that Republicans enjoy attacking, does not represent either the values or the interests of most recent third-world immigrants.

In short, though the old, traditional culture continues to exist in the United States, it is overlaid today with an elite culture that espouses very different values. The real danger is not that these elites will become corrupted by the habits and practices of third-world immigrants, but rather that the immigrants will become corrupted by them. And that is in fact what tends to happen.

While the first generation of immigrants to the United States tends to be deferential to established authority and preoccupied with the economic problems of "making it," their children and grandchildren become aware of their own entitlements and rights, more politicized, and able to exploit the political system to defend and expand those entitlements. While the first generation is willing to work quietly at minimum- or subminimum-wage jobs, the second and third generations have higher expectations as to what their labor is worth. The extension of welfare and other social benefits to noncitizens through a series of court decisions has had the perverse effect of hastening the spread of welfare dependency. Part of the reason that Puerto Ricans do less well than other Latino groups may be that they were never really immigrants at all, but U.S. citizens, and therefore eligible for social benefits at a very early stage.

As Julian Simon has shown, neither the absolute nor the relative levels of immigration over the past decade have been inordinately high by historical standards. What is different and very troubling about immigration in the present period is that the ideology that existed at the turn of the century and promoted assimilation into the dominant Anglo-Saxon culture has been replaced by a multicultural one that legitimates and even promotes continuing cultural differentness.

THE intellectual and social origins of multiculturalism are complex, but one thing is clear: it is both a Western and an American invention. The American Founding was based on certain Enlightenment notions of the universality of human equality and freedom, but such ideas have been under attack within the Western tradition itself for much of the past two centuries. The second half of the late Allan Bloom's *The Closing of the American Mind* (the part that most buyers of the book skipped over) chronicles the way in which the relativist ideas of Nietzsche and Heidegger were transported to American shores at mid-century. Combined with an easygoing American egalitarianism, they led

not just to a belief in the need for cultural tolerance, but to a positive assertion of the equal moral validity of all cultures. Today the writings of Michel Foucault, a French epigone of Nietzsche, have become the highbrow source of academic multiculturalism.

France may have produced Foucault, but France has not implemented a multicultural educational curriculum to anything like the degree the U.S. has. The origins of multiculturalism here must therefore be traced to the specific circumstances of American social life. Contrary to the arguments of multiculturalism's promoters, it was not a necessary adjustment to the reality of our pluralistic society. The New York City public-school system in the year 1910 was as diverse as it is today, and yet it never occurred to anyone to celebrate and preserve the native cultures of the city's Italians, Greeks, Poles, Jews, or Chinese.

The shift in attitudes toward cultural diversity can be traced to the aftermath of the civil-rights movement, when it became clear that integration was not working for blacks. The failure to assimilate was interpreted as an indictment of the old, traditional mainstream Anglo-Saxon culture: "Wasp" took on a pejorative connotation, and African-Americans began to take pride in the separateness of their own traditions. Ironically, the experience of African-Americans became the model for subsequent immigrant groups like Latinos who could have integrated themselves into mainstream society as easily as the Italians or Poles before them.

It is true that Hispanic organizations now constitute part of the multiculturalist coalition and have been very vocal in pushing for bilingual/bicultural education. There is increasing evidence, however, that rank-and-file immigrants are much more traditionally assimilationist than some of their more vocal leaders. For example, most Chinese and Russian immigrant parents in New York City deliberately avoid sending their children to the bilingual-education classes offered to them by the public-school system, believing that a cold plunge into English will be a much more effective means of learning to function in American society.

Hispanics generally show more support for bilingual education, but even here a revealing recent study indicates that an overwhelming number of Hispanic parents see bilingualism primarily as a means of learning English, and not of preserving Hispanic culture.⁵ This same study indicates that most Hispanics identify strongly with the United States, and show a relatively low level of Spanish maintenance in the home. By contrast, multiculturalism is more strongly supported by many other groups—blacks, feminists,

⁵ See Rodolfo O. de la Garza, Louis DeSipio, et al., *Latino Voices: Mexican, Puerto Rican, and Cuban Perspectives on American Politics* (Westview Press, 1992).

gays, Native Americans, etc.—whose ancestors have been in the country from the start.

BRIMELOW's *National Review* piece suggests that even if immigrants are not responsible for our anti-assimilationist multiculturalism, we need not pour oil on burning waters by letting in more immigrants from non-Western cultures. But this argument can be reversed: even if the rate of new immigration fell to zero tomorrow, and the most recent five million immigrants were sent home, we would still have an enormous problem in this country with the breakdown of a core culture and the infatuation of the school system with trendy multiculturalist educational policies.

The real fight, the central fight, then, should not be over keeping newcomers out: this will be a waste of time and energy. The real fight ought to be over the question of assimilation itself: whether we believe that there is enough to our Western, rational, egalitarian, democratic civilization to force those coming to the country to absorb its language and rules, or whether we carry respect for other cultures to the point that Americans no longer have a common voice with which to speak to one another.

Apart from the humble habits of work and family values, opponents of immigration ought to consider culture at the high end of the scale. As anyone who has walked around an elite American university recently would know, immigration from Asia is transforming the nature of American education. For a country that has long prided itself on technological superiority, and whose economic future rests in large part on a continuing technical edge, a depressingly small number of white Americans from long-established families choose to go into engineering and science programs in preference to business and, above all, law school. (This is particularly true of the most dynamic and vocal part of the white population, upwardly mobile middle-class women.) The one bright spot in an otherwise uniform horizon of decline in educational test scores has been in math, where large numbers of new Asian test-takers have bumped up the numbers.⁶ In Silicon Valley alone, there are some 12,000 engineers of Chinese descent, while Chinese account for two out of every five engineering and science graduates in the University of California system.

Indeed, if one were to opt for "designer immigration" that would open the gates to peoples with the best cultural values, it is not at all clear that certain European countries would end up on top.

In the past decade, England's per-capita GNP has fallen behind Italy's, and threatens to displace Portugal and Greece at the bottom of the European Community heap by the end of the decade. Only a fifth of English young people receive any form of higher education, and despite Margaret

Thatcher's best efforts, little progress has been made over the past generation in breaking down the stifling social rigidities of the British class system. The English working class is among the least well-educated, most state- and welfare-dependent and immobile of any in the developed world. While the British intelligentsia and upper classes continue to intimidate middle-class Americans, they can do so only on the basis of snobbery and inherited but rapidly dwindling intellectual capital. Paul Gigot may or may not be right that a million Zulus would work harder than a million English, but a million Taiwanese certainly would, and would bring with them much stronger family structures and entrepreneurship to boot.

IV

THIS is not to say that immigration will not be the source of major economic and social problems for the United States in the future. There are at least three areas of particular concern.

The first has to do with the effects of immigration on income distribution, particularly at the low end of the scale. The growing inequality of American income distribution over the past decade is not, as the Democrats asserted during the election campaign, the result of Reagan-Bush tax policies or the failure of "trickle-down" economics. Rather, it proceeds from the globalization of the American economy: low-skill labor increasingly has to compete with low-skill labor in Malaysia, Brazil, Mexico, and elsewhere. But it has also had to compete with low-skill immigrant labor coming into the country from the third world, which explains why Hispanics themselves tend to oppose further Hispanic immigration. The country as a whole may be better off economically as a result of this immigration, but those against whom immigrants directly compete have been hurt, just as they will be hurt by the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA), the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT), and other trade-liberalizing measures that are good for the country as a whole. In a city like Los Angeles, Hispanics with their stronger social ties have displaced blacks out of a variety of menial jobs, adding to the woes of an already troubled black community.

The second problem area has to do with the regional concentration of recent Hispanic immigration. As everyone knows, the 25 million Hispanics in the United States are not evenly distributed throughout the country, but are concentrated in the Southwest portion of it, where the problems normally accompanying the assimilation of immigrant communities tend to be mag-

⁶ This same group of Asians appears also to have lowered verbal scores, though this is something that will presumably be corrected over time.

nified. The L.A. public-school system is currently in a state of breakdown, as it tries to educate burgeoning numbers of recent immigrants on a recession-starved budget.

The third problem concerns bilingualism and the elite Hispanic groups which promote and exist off of it. As noted earlier, the rank-and-file of the Hispanic community seems reasonably committed to assimilation; the same cannot be said for its leadership. Bilingualism, which initially began as a well-intentioned if misguided bridge toward learning English, has become in the eyes of many of its proponents a means of keeping alive a separate Spanish language and culture. Numerous studies have indicated that students in bilingual programs learn English less well than those without access to them, and that their enrollments are swelled by a large number of Hispanics who can already speak English perfectly well.⁷ In cities with large Hispanic populations like New York and Los Angeles, the bilingual bureaucracy has become something of a monster, rigidly tracking students despite the wishes of parents and students. The *New York Times* recently reported the case of a Hispanic-surnamed child, born in the United States and

speaking only English, who was forced by New York City officials to enroll in an English as a Second Language Class. Bilingualism is but one symptom of a much broader crisis in American public education, and admittedly makes the problems of assimilation much greater.

These problems can be tackled with specific changes in public policy. But the central issue raised by the immigration question is indeed a cultural one, and as such less susceptible of policy manipulation. The problem here is not the foreign culture that immigrants bring with them from the third world, but the contemporary elite culture of Americans—Americans like Kevin Costner, who believes that America began going downhill when the white man set foot here, or another American, Ice-T, whose family has probably been in the country longer than Costner's and who believes that women are bitches and that the chief enemy of his generation is the police. In the upcoming block-by-block cultural war, the enemy will not speak Spanish or have a brown skin. In Pogo's words, "He is us."

⁷ On this point, see Linda Chavez's *Out of the Barrio*, pp. 9-38.

Blessing Capitalism

Paul Johnson

THERE is no greater source of muddled thinking than the relationship between religion and economic systems. Throughout the 18th and 19th centuries, most churches, established and free, Catholic and Protestant, condemned socialism root and branch. In the 20th century, most of them, in varying degrees, have condemned capitalism.

Indeed, many Christian theologians have gone beyond condemnation. Thus, as Father Richard John Neuhaus reminds us in his new book, *Doing Well and Doing Good*,* the Protestant theologian Paul Tillich asserted flatly: "Any serious Christian must be a socialist." And Tillich went further still:

Religious socialism calls the capitalist system demonic, on the one hand, because of the union of creative and destructive powers present in it; on the other, because of the inevitability of the class struggle independent of subjective morality and piety. The effect of the capitalist system upon society and upon every individual in it takes the typical form of "possession," that is, of being "possessed"; its character is demonic.

Religious hostility to capitalism appears to spring from two sources. One runs very old and deep, arising from an apparent contradiction in the teaching of Moses in the Hebrew Bible. In the book of Deuteronomy, Moses stresses the links between affluence and moral worthiness. So long as Israel keeps the law, he says, God

will love thee and bless thee and multiply thee: He will also bless the fruit of thy womb, and the fruit of thy land, thy corn and thy wine, and thine oil, the increase of thy kine and the flocks of thy sheep, in the land which He swore unto thy fathers to give thee.

Israel, Moses continues, will indeed be wealthy, and "thou shalt lend unto many nations." But, he adds significantly, "thou shalt not borrow."

This apparent ban on borrowing at interest, without which all economic societies, except the most primitive, find it difficult to proceed, caused

perennial difficulties for Jews and those of any faith based on Mosaic law. "Usury," from the simple Latin *usus, uti*, to use, still has a sinister ring as a result of religious and popular censure, and still features in the vocabulary of political abuse.

In practice, of course, varying dodges were worked out by both Jews and Christians to get around the prohibition, and these received varying degrees of approbation from rabbis and priests. The Jews proved the more willing to rationalize money into a system of ethics. In the Middle Ages, religious philosophers like Maimonides and Nahmanides never made the assumption, so characteristic of the Christian intelligentsia, of an absolute distinction between book-reading and book-writing on the one hand and book-keeping on the other. Defending Judaism in a religious disputation at Ferrara in 1500, Rabbi Abraham Farissol of Avignon broke through the difficulty by arguing that conditions had changed since biblical times and money was now a commodity like any other: if you hired it, of course you had to pay for its use, just as you paid rent for hiring a building or wages to a hired hand. Isaac Abrabanel, in a commentary on Deuteronomy completed in 1496, went further and insisted:

There is nothing unworthy about interest . . . because it is proper that people should make a profit out of their money, wine, and corn. . . . Why should the farmer [who] received wheat to sow his field not give the lender 10 percent if he is successful, as he usually should be? This is an ordinary business transaction, and correct.

The more traditional Christian churches were slow to adopt this line of reasoning despite the huge expansion of the world economy in the 16th century. Not only Catholic but Lutheran writers continued to attack usury in any form until well into the 17th century. Calvin, on the other hand, argued that the prohibition in Deuteronomy was not universal but applied only to the Hebrews; for non-Hebrews, the only guide should be the Christian law of charity.

* Doubleday, 312 pp., \$22.00.

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Calvinist pastors were under pressure to toe this line. In 1564-65, Bartholomew Gernhard of St. Andrew, Rudolstadt, was forced out of office for refusing communion to men who had loaned money at interest; and in 1587 at Ratisbon five preachers were expelled for insisting on preaching against usury. Protestant majorities in the English parliament approved lending at interest in 1545 and again in 1571.

Nevertheless, usury remained associated in many minds with extortion. Usury laws were not abolished in Britain until 1858 and in some U.S. states even later. These residual feelings surfaced again when capitalism fell into intellectual disrepute in the 1930's, but now they combined with the second of the two factors I have mentioned: the rise of Protestant guilt.

FROM the mid-18th century onward, it came to be noted that the most successful trading nations were Protestant, and this impression spread during the first phase of the Industrial Revolution. In the 19th century it was quite commonplace to link industrialization and economic success with Protestantism, and it was also noticed that even in Catholic countries like France, Belgium, and Austria, the entrepreneurial lead had been taken by members of the Protestant minority. In the 20th century, sociologists and historians like Max Weber and R.H. Tawney attributed the rise of capitalism to specific religious notions, variously termed the "Protestant Ethic" and "Salvation Panic," in which the desire to achieve righteous commercial success, as an external sign of godliness, became an engine of self-sustaining economic growth. Fear of Hell made men industrious, the argument ran, and therefore rich.

It was this theory, emphasizing as it did the identification of some forms of Christian teaching with the machinery of capitalism—had not the Dutch Calvinist Claude Saumaise argued in his treatise *On Usury* (1638) that charging interest was now *necessary* to salvation?—which helped to create those guilt feelings about entrepreneurial wealth-creation so marked, in our time, among many Christian leaders, theologians, and enthusiasts. And guilt, in its turn, bred a willingness to promote socialism as the most obvious alternative to capitalism.

Today, however, few historians would endorse the Weber-Tawney thesis. It is open to too many objections when applied to particular societies. For instance, few if any countries were more completely Calvinist than Scotland between 1560 and 1700, yet it is hard to demonstrate how the Reformation in any way favored the rise of economic individualism there. Quite the contrary: Scottish culture and economy began to flourish only in the 18th century when Calvinism, with its all-consuming demands, began to relax its grip.

What does seem to be true is that the progressive elements in a given society, which gradually became identified with the capitalist system, were marked not by adherence to any particular doctrine but by antipathy to highly institutionalized and clericalized Christianity of any kind. The common characteristic of these entrepreneurs—whose religious feeling was often intense but essentially private and personal—was their desire to be left alone by religious enthusiasts and organizers, and to escape from the clericalist and canon-law network. They thus tended to emigrate, and it was the act of movement, from restrictive societies to more relaxed ones, which liberated their energies and ingenuity.

All emigrant groups, indeed, tend to do better in new surroundings, a proposition which has been demonstrated again and again by the Jews. It is also confirmed by the whole history of the United States, where persecuted minorities, whether English Presbyterians and Quakers or Irish Catholics or, in our own day, refugees from Vietnam and Cuba, have swiftly achieved an affluence inconceivable in their homelands. The United States, with its freedom from clericalism and canon law, and its stress on moral as opposed to dogmatic theology, was the perfect setting for private as opposed to institutionalized religion to flourish, for the benefit of Protestants, Catholics, and Jews alike.

GREATER appreciation for the complexities of the interaction between religion and economic growth has somewhat undermined Christian guilt feelings in recent years. Equally, the manifest failure of socialist systems to deliver reasonable standards of material well-being has undermined collectivism as an alternative. Against this background, Pope John Paul II's encyclical on economic systems, *Centesimus Annus* (1991), was well-timed. Richard Neuhaus's *Doing Well and Doing Good* is, in effect, a commentary on the contents and impact of that encyclical, and of the religious and political debate from which it emerged. So, too, is *The Catholic Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*, a new book by another well-known Catholic thinker, Michael Novak.* It is especially useful to read these works together because they neatly complement one another, and the bifocal vision they offer is illuminating.

Neuhaus points out that Catholic views on the morality of rival economic systems are of increasing importance because Catholic countries like Spain, Portugal, the Philippines, Poland, Hungary, and Czechoslovakia have been among the most important beneficiaries of the waves of democratization which swept the world in the 1970's and 1980's. In this process, politics, economics,

* Free Press, 334 pp., \$24.95.

and Catholic teaching on individual rights have been inextricably mixed. The likelihood, therefore, is that prospects of full democratization, and of continued popular attachment to the Catholic interpretation of the Judeo-Christian ethic, will be strongly influenced by the ability of these economies to deliver the goods to ordinary people.

Unlike most clergymen who write on public affairs, Neuhaus is a punchy, no-nonsense writer, and his book is stoutly constructed. The first two chapters outline the way in which religious and moral teaching has influenced economic policy. Then Neuhaus devotes four chapters to the way in which the Catholic Church in particular has approached economic issues—a difficult subject, rich in misunderstandings, which he clarifies. After a chapter analyzing the Pope's view of the significance of the revolutionary events of 1989 in Eastern Europe, he devotes his last five chapters to a close examination of *Centesimus Annus* and especially its implications for American policy issues.

Michael Novak ranges over a wider field. Novak's writings on democratic capitalism have rightly earned him a world reputation—indeed, it is hard to think of anyone since Adam Smith who has single-handedly done more to portray the civilized and useful face of capitalism. In his new book, his aim is nothing less than to present the Catholic alternative to the Protestant Ethic.

Accordingly, the first part of *The Catholic Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism* looks at earlier papal teachings on capitalist and socialist ethics. The second examines the work of John Paul II, both as a philosopher and an apostle of human freedom and as a moral commentator on economics. In the third part, Novak tries to show how these various teachings can help the world tackle the looming problems of racial tension and mass poverty in the 21st century.

But let us focus on one central issue where Neuhaus and Novak bring somewhat different perspectives to bear. The point in John Paul's thinking which Neuhaus seizes on most eagerly is that there are really two understandings of capitalism. One of them merely recognizes

the fundamental and positive role of business, the market, private property, and the resulting responsibility for the means of production, as well as free human creativity in the economic sector.

The second appreciates that the enormously powerful forces thus unleashed have to be

circumscribed within a strong juridical framework that places it at the service of human freedom in its totality and that sees it as a particular aspect of that freedom, the core of which is ethical and religious.

John Paul insists, and Neuhaus agrees, that the first understanding of capitalism has to be rejected. The second is not merely acceptable but in a sense unavoidable because there appears no other way in which sufficient wealth can be *ethically* created to address the world's problems. Neuhaus deals in some detail with how the Pope believes capitalism can be rendered institutionally ethical. His book is a plea that all those in the Judeo-Christian tradition, but especially America's Catholics, should seize the opportunity, as he puts it, to "cultivate the spirituality of enterprise."

Novak addresses himself more directly to what this "Catholic Ethic" entails. He endorses the need to circumscribe entrepreneurial energies by an enlightened corset of law, but he also draws attention to the enormous potentialities—as he sees them—of capitalism itself. Though he admits that capitalism is "not even close to being the Kingdom of God," that it is not a religion or even a philosophy instructing mankind how to live, nevertheless,

compared to socialist and traditional cultures, . . . its institutions do set a higher moral standard, and do insist on certain basic moral habits. Up to some low threshold, then, it is a way of life, and not merely a neutral technique. . . . Its inner form, though this-worldly, springs from inspirations derived in good measure from Jewish and Christian sources. And this historical form is subject to further specification by a more perfect practice of Christian and Jewish life.

This is a very bold and challenging statement. I am delighted that someone of Novak's force and eminence should have made it, because such a proposition, for which he argues cogently in his book, ought to be widely debated. But I do not agree with it, and I suspect it is open to the same objections as the (admittedly more arrogant) statements by Tillich and others that good Christians—some would say good Jews, too—must be socialists.

PERHAPS it is a pity that the word "capitalism" ever came into general use. It is in fact a fairly late invention: "capitalist," a man who habitually employs sums of money for investment, is a much older coinage, but "capitalism" is misleading. It implies a deliberately conceived set of beliefs put together at a specific date to achieve a predetermined purpose. But no such thing ever happened. No one invented the thing. In a reasonably free society, such a system is likely to emerge at a certain stage of economic sophistication, and is the cumulative work of many thousands of anonymous individuals operating to further their self-interest. Only afterward does a clever analyst like Adam Smith come along to explain what has happened. Lord North went to

his grave without realizing that he had, as England's Prime Minister during the early years of the Industrial Revolution, presided over the world's first "economic miracle."

In short, "capitalism" is an organic process, springing from human nature and ingenuity, and will occur of its own accord unless positive steps are taken to prevent it—unlike socialism, which has to be deliberately organized and imposed. It is thus a fundamental error to see capitalism and socialism in ideological symmetry; they are quite different phenomena. You can indeed assess the ethical merits of socialism, and pronounce a verdict on it. But capitalism itself has no more human values than a computer or an account book: its morality resides in the people who operate it.

And that is why Novak is right, I believe, to argue that in any country,

the more closely attuned to Christian and Jewish faith that its citizens become, the better democracy, capitalism, and pluralism should function.

This looks at first glance like a truism, but it is not. Capitalism is a morally neutral force (in my judgment), but I doubt whether it can function effectively without some energizing from all of the seven deadly sins except sloth. In a godless society, lacking the systematic moral education which organized religion provides in families and schools, and the regular practice of religious duties, we are therefore bound to get the first kind

of capitalism against which John Paul II and Neuhaus warn us. To put it crudely, capitalism will tend to be bad if there is a predominance of bad capitalists.

On the other hand, in a godly society—not a moral utopia, of course, but one where the Judeo-Christian ethic finds strong public and private expression—capitalism is a wonderfully creative force. I stress "creative" because, thanks to the writings of men like Novak and Neuhaus (building on the original insights of George Gilder in particular), we are beginning to realize that there is no essential difference in creativity between writing a symphony or epic poem and building a successful business which supplies a useful product and gives honest employment to thousands. I wish children were taught this in school, and students in universities. (Of course, entrepreneurial activity can do harm, but so can the thoughts of a great creative artist like Tolstoy, that harbinger of Soviet collectivism.)

The sheer creativity which capitalist techniques make possible fits in particularly well with God's promises to Moses in the passage from Deuteronomy I have quoted. The divine plan was indeed that we should enjoy the fruits of the earth and of our own industry, and capitalism is the best way we have yet devised to organize the latter. But it was equally the divine plan that God should be worshiped and obeyed and, not least, feared. The fear of the Lord, in short, is the beginning of capitalist wisdom, as of any other kind.

Are Russian Jews in Danger?

Peter Brodsky

MOST educated Americans are familiar with at least some aspects of Russian anti-Semitism from their reading; from what they know about the history of *The Protocols of the Elders of Zion*; from echoes that have reached them concerning the liquidation of the Yiddish theater and the Yiddish writers' union in 1948-49, Stalin's infamous "Doctors' Plot" of 1952, or the harsh anti-Zionist and anti-Israel rhetoric that was a permanent feature of Soviet foreign policy from the 1960's to Gorbachev. Many Americans, too, have heard of today's extreme nationalist party, Pamyat, or of the group of Russian "Village Prose" writers who in recent years have galvanized traditional Russian xenophobia and engaged in vicious anti-Semitic and anti-Western rhetoric. Some may even know of Vladimir Zhirinovskiy, the political figure whom many Russian Jews today call "our Hitler" and who in the 1991 presidential elections captured third place after Boris Yeltsin with seven million votes.

Nevertheless, although present-day anti-Semitism in Russia extends well beyond the efforts of Pamyat, it has been little discussed in the American press over the past two years and is rarely mentioned even in serious analyses of Russian society or politics. Even among Jews, both in the United States and Israel, Russian anti-Semitism seems to have been displaced by the question of whether Russian society at large will crumble under the pressure of hyperinflation and political factionalism.

There are good reasons for this. Over the last two years, none of the actions against Jews threatened by the anti-Semitic nationalist coalition in Russia has, in fact, materialized. Though Zhirinovskiy's rhetoric is repellent, he is widely viewed as a clown by Russians and foreign observers alike. Furthermore, the Yeltsin government itself is emphatically not anti-Semitic, and Jews as a group have prospered under the recent reforms.

So to the outside observer, there appears to be no present threat to Jews as Jews in Russia. Emigration to the United States or Israel, it is thought, may help Russian Jews escape a looming

economic disaster, from which they are likely to suffer along with the rest of the population—but there is no specifically Jewish catastrophe from which they need to be rescued.

This was my view, too, when I first visited Moscow on business in early 1992, and initially I saw little to make me think otherwise, despite the anti-Semitic graffiti I encountered in subway stations. It was a surprise, then, when Professor B. Volkov, a former member of the Central Committee of the Communist party and a distinguished academic, commented to me that he thought there would be a fascist coup in a year or two. "Fascist?" "Yes. A military-nationalist coup." "And what will that mean?" "The first thing is that the Jews will be rounded up and put in concentration camps."

My reaction to this statement was first alarm, and then skepticism. "If this is what you think," I asked him, knowing that he was of Jewish descent, "why don't you leave?" He replied that over the past year he had indeed managed to get his children out of the country—one to Israel, one to France. "My work is here," he explained. "When it is finished I'll leave if I can. My children are safe now and I am no longer afraid."

Although distinguishing between "objective" conditions and mere personal impression is very difficult in the present chaos of Russian politics, every Jew with whom I have spoken on this subject in Moscow has a definite sense of foreboding, if not so precisely articulated a vision of disaster as Volkov. Even if past threats of anti-Semitic campaigns have not materialized, they point out, what will happen if economic conditions should become intolerable? Before, there was still optimism for democracy and the future. Today, there is mounting frustration and despair over a future of which the Russian people in general—and young people in particular—already feel deprived.

RECENT emigration statistics to Israel offer perhaps the most suggestive index of the fear now felt by Russian Jews as Jews. From 1989 to 1992, the number leaving the Russian Federation (Russia) comprised only 27 percent of the total from the former Soviet Union;

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in 1992, that figure rose to 40 percent, and some Israeli officials speculate that it will go up still higher. If hard economic conditions were the main factor at work, one would expect emigration from Ukraine, where the economy is even worse than in Russia, to have increased as well. But that is not the case. Ukrainian Jewish emigration has remained relatively constant despite the worsening economy there. The difference between the two countries is that in Ukraine today there is practically no public anti-Semitism, either in the media or in political rhetoric.

In Russia, by contrast, though *state*-sponsored anti-Semitism ceased under Gorbachev and Yeltsin, a kind of black-market anti-Semitism has taken its place. It draws not upon governmental sanction but upon age-old Russian xenophobia and the traditional stock-in-trade of pre-Soviet anti-Semitic obsessions.

Such sentiments are given expression in a variety of newspapers and magazines available in Moscow, often within a block of the Kremlin itself, in editions ranging from about 10,000 to 200,000 printed copies. (Russian publications usually list such data on the last page of each number.) The names of some of these publications appear below, along with print-run figures and symbols indicating their editorial character: N=nationalistic; R=religious; AS=anti-Semitic; C=Communist:

<i>Narodnaya Pravda</i>	(200,000; N/AS)
<i>Dyen</i>	(120,000; N/AS)
<i>Russkii Poryadok</i>	(Dec. '92, 50,000; Feb. '93, 120,000; N/R/AS)
<i>Pamyat</i>	(100,000; N/R/AS)
<i>Russkiye Vedomosti</i>	(100,000; N/AS)
<i>Molniya</i>	(70,000; N/C/AS)
<i>Russkii Vyestnik</i>	(60,000; N/R/AS)
<i>Puls Tushina</i>	(40,000; N/AS)
<i>Russkoye Voskriseniye</i>	(40,000—may have recently discontinued publication because the editor was arrested; N/AS)
<i>Nasha Rossiya</i>	(30,000; N/AS)
<i>Russkii Puls</i>	(30,000; N/AS)
<i>Otchestvo</i>	(25,000; N/AS)
<i>Russkii Soyuz</i>	(10,000; N/R/AS)
<i>Yedinstvo</i>	(9,000; N/C)
<i>Moskovskii Literater</i>	(8,000; N/AS)
<i>Palestinskii Golos</i>	(n/a; N/AS)
<i>Russkii Sobor</i>	(n/a; N/R)
<i>Russkoye Dyelo</i>	(n/a; N/AS)

In these newspapers and magazines, nationalist sentiment feeds upon a hatred of foreigners, minorities, Jews, and the West. Virtually all agree

on a constellation of extremist ideas, among which are included the following:

- The assertions to be found in *The Protocols of the Elders of Zion* are essentially true even if the document itself might be a forgery; thus,
- There is a worldwide Zionist/Jewish conspiracy;
- U.S. foreign and domestic policy is controlled by Zionist interests;
- Jews control the news media;
- Jews fomented the Bolshevik Revolution, profited from it, and suppressed the Russian masses;
- Jews are arch-capitalists and economic manipulators who profit most from the present situation in Russia;
- Jewish culture—"Talmudism"—is degenerate, immoral, and perverted;
- The Holocaust was financed by Jews to gain world sympathy for the creation of Israel;
- There is no real anti-Semitism in Russia—rather, anti-Jewish feeling is itself the result of Jewish exclusivism and immoral behavior;
- The Russian state should be for Russians;
- For all the above reasons, Jews are natural enemies of the state;
- Yeltsin is controlled by worldwide Jewry.

Frequently-cited corollaries to these basic propositions are:

- Hitler was innately well-disposed to Russia; or, conversely,
- Yeltsin and Gorbachev have simply implemented and fulfilled Hitler's plans to destroy the Soviet Union;
- Yeltsin has Jewish relatives, including his wife and his uncle;
- There have been at least six million Palestinian victims of Israel's Jewish fascism;
- Jewish suffering in World War II was deserved, largely self-inflicted, and exaggerated.

THESE various slanders do not form a single, coherent ideology. Communist nationalist newspapers, for example, differ from the straightforwardly anti-Semitic nationalist newspapers over the character of Hitler, while the more religious papers, like *Pamyat*, fuse their nationalistic fervor to a pre-Soviet ideal. In some instances Jews ("Yids" or "kikes") are linked with other foreigners or ethnic minorities such as Tatars, Gypsies, or Caucasians; at other times, Jews are signified only through the code word "Zionism."

It is also important to note that although in its visual iconography this literature is identical to Nazi propaganda sheets like *Der Stuermer*, the literature itself—to the extent that I have seen it—does not equate Jews with a biologically inferior or corrupt race and does not appear to rely on "race-thinking" as much as it does on nationalistic ethnocentrism. The fact that the verbal rhetoric does not match the iconology further demon-

strates the confused, somewhat indeterminate state of current Russian anti-Semitism.

Here are some excerpts:

Kikes ["zhidi"]—This word designates persons of Jewish origin (independent of national affiliation) in whom the fiercest hatred for the rest of humanity is concentrated. [*Russkoye Voskriseniye*, No. 7/15]

The entire history of kikedom is the history of the robbery, the oppression, and the destruction of other peoples: Arabs in Palestine, Russians in Russia, Indians in America, Negroes in Africa (through slavery), Chinese in Asia (through the opium wars). [*Russkoye Voskriseniye*, No. 7/15]

When Yeltsin arrived in America, all the newspapers notified Americans that Yeltsin's wife was—Jewish. "One of ours has arrived!" crowed the Jewish press. But what is necessary for Americans to know is not offered to Russians. For Russians, Yeltsin's spouse must appear as a modest Russian woman. . . . Nevertheless, the fact that Naina Yosefovna is Jewish is already known to many. [There follows a list of prominent Bolsheviks who supposedly had Jewish wives: Kirov, Andreyev, Voroshilov, Kalinin, Molotov, Rykov, Bukharin, Stalin, and Khrushchev.] [*Russkoye Dyelo*, November 1992]

On July 29, 1991 . . . there suddenly appeared in Moscow 200 rabbinical Hasidim, envoys of the Lubavitcher *rebbe*, the same group which in the first part of the 18th century . . . began the extremist movement within Judaism known as Hasidism. . . . In the era before Gorbachev this group was known simply as Jewish Nazism or Jewish fascism. . . . [*Puls Tushina*, September 1991]

We have reached a critical moment in the fate of our state. . . . Why are we standing now at this great abyss? . . . As is well known, in the 1980's an opposition movement formed, calling itself "democratic," although it had nothing in common with the truth of democracy. Its main ideologues and leaders were people with anti-Russian, anti-patriotic world views, and with pro-American, pro-Zionist orientations. [*Nasha Rossiya*, July 1992]

On Russian soil there is now a war going on against the Russian people! It is perhaps time to comprehend that the Zionist-Caucasian Mafia insolently pillages the Russian people by inflating prices and exporting goods abroad, thus depleting our internal markets!!

It is perhaps time to remember the fate of the Russian officer corps, destroyed after 1917 by the Zionist-Bolshevik government—and to think as one about the fate of the present Russian officer corps!! [*Russkiye Vedomosti*, December 1992]

We Russians today are the poorest, the lowest in our rich country. We—without a Russian state—are a nation without a future, and a people without a face.

We live in our age-old land without our own state and find ourselves at the mercy of Zionists, like the American Indians. [*Russkiye Vedomosti*, December 1992]

Who actually gained leadership [in 1918]? The facts testify that in 1917, of 556 individuals occupying the highest party and state positions, 448 were Jews; the remainder—Lettish [Latvian], Armenian, etc. But there were practically no Russians. . . . The situation did not change in successive years. On one side—the destruction of the priesthood and the peasantry; on the other side—the almost complete absence of Russians in the leadership of the Bolshevik party of the Soviet government and in the organs of punitive repression. [*Russkii Poryadok*, February 2, 1993]

WHO actually reads these newspapers? No one can say with much clarity, but it appears that the younger generation, which lacks a sense of history on the one hand and feels robbed of a future on the other, makes up a sizable percentage of susceptible readers.

Are the papers an independent phenomenon, or is something more sinister going on? A lead story in the newspaper *Russkii Poryadok* ("Russian Order"), dated February 2, 1993, declares that the "Symbol of the Future Russia" will be a variation on the swastika. In the same issue, the front-page editorial is entitled "Nationalism or Patriotism: On the Inevitability of a National Revolution." As it happens, one of the apparent propaganda goals of at least some factions in the KGB today is to encourage people to think that Gorbachev and Yeltsin have implemented Hitler's plans to dismantle the Soviet Union into various ethnic enclaves—the point of this charge being to discredit Yeltsin and turn people against his reforms. A version of this is forcefully and opportunistically presented in the February 2 editorial, which also accuses Jews of having led the Bolsheviks to victory and of masterminding the destruction of Mother Russia.

In a special issue of *Molniya* published in late 1992 under the title *Dubinushka* ("The Cudgel"), a feature article articulates more precisely the same KGB line. Entitled "Fascism—The Plans for the Subjugation and Extermination of the Russian People," the article concludes:

Thus, Hitler's aims and methods for the complete destruction of Russia and the subjugation of her people by external occupation fully agree with the aims and methods of Yeltsin's internal occupation.

The coincidence between these newspaper editorials and the interests of the KGB gives some credence to the widespread suspicion that Pamyat and other nationalist organizations are secretly funded by the KGB. Yet the fact that the KGB's views are represented in both a fascist-nationalist publication like *Russkii Poryadok* and a Commu-

nist-nationalist publication like *Dubinushka* illustrates the present disorder of Russian political alliances. A former United States intelligence officer put it to me this way:

Russia is still at a point prior to serious cadre-building by any group. The question in the end will be who will train and equip the cadres which will seize power? Who will pull the trigger? Right now there isn't anyone to pull the trigger.

As long as Boris Yeltsin remains in power, all these expressions of perversity can perhaps be dismissed as mere flowers of evil. But it is precisely the widespread feeling, recently tested yet again, that Yeltsin may lose his struggle for power that causes alarm. If Russia truly "unravels," there will be some who will energetically claim that the Jews are destroying the country. And if Yeltsin's government should be replaced by one in which the alliance of nationalist and fascist elements plays a larger role, Russian Jews may well face much more than verbal abuse from the extremist press.

Even those Russian Jews without Professor Volkov's specific premonitions of disaster are trying to ensure that their children can have a future outside of Russia. One woman said to me, "My eyes have grown small with crying" for the daughter she had sent off to an aunt in Chicago. She has another child, too young to emigrate by himself. "Why don't you all leave?" I asked. She answered, "What am I or my husband to do? Can he teach in America or Israel? Can I practice medicine? We will leave if things get worse."

Tanya Ozmanova, a skilled translator with a small son and unwell, elderly parents, made perhaps the greatest impression on me with her recitation of the simple but terribly complex human situation in which many Russian Jews now find themselves:

I cannot go to Israel with my parents [both of whom are distinguished academics]. What will they do? What will I do? Here I have a reputation. Work. I have some sort of life. In Israel I would have no chance. And is Israel really that secure anyway? As soon as Saddam Hussein or some other madman gets an atomic bomb, probably furnished compliments of ex-Soviet scientists, won't Israel be the first target?

Tanya's seven-year-old son has been harassed at school, and a note, scrawled in a child's hand and reading, "Jews go to Israel," was recently pinned to her front door. "When it gets worse," Tanya told me, "I'll apply to go to Israel. If I could

come to America now, I would leave. But I can't go to America because we don't have a first-degree relative."

TO A RATIONAL observer it seems plain enough that if a threat is real, one *must* pick up and leave; if one does not, then the threat cannot be real. The situation in Russia, however, does not yield so readily to logical categories. For one thing, the objective conditions are uncertain and therefore difficult for anyone, either in Russia itself or abroad, to assess. But also, for Jews contemplating exodus from Russia this is not simply a job transfer, not a matter of the rational assessment of opportunities, but a change in destiny.

Tanya is a highly intelligent woman nearly my age. The combination of surnames in her family is similar to the combination in mine. Her forebears come from the same mix of Ukrainian and Bessarabian localities as do mine. As I spoke with her, I thought: our fates could well have been reversed. My grandparents left impoverished circumstances to seek their fortunes in the U.S. What must it take, by contrast, to acknowledge that all one has done—all the personal accomplishments, the worldly goods, the reputation one has achieved—is precisely nothing?

I asked Tanya if she felt any *objective* danger for herself as a Jew. Her reply seemed to me to sum up the entire dilemma, political and existential, that Jews like her confront in today's Russia:

First of all, I feel threatened as a democratically oriented person of the intelligentsia. But I know for sure that if something does happen, the first group threatened will be Jews.

Why? Because the national question is the great question for Russia today. That is something that will play politically if there's a collapse. Zhirinovsky is a clown but a dangerous clown, capable of becoming something very bad if the conditions are right. There is today no objective danger, but if things change drastically, all that will change as well.

So what can I do? I don't want to panic, and my friends feel the same way. To live expecting disaster is impossible. My Russian friends—and I have many—are sympathetic, but it's a subject we don't really discuss anymore because I feel uncomfortable about it with them. They say to me, "At least you have somewhere to go. We don't."

Russians will have to find scapegoats for disaster, because that's the way we think. Jews will be the obvious scapegoats. It's an old story. I believe in fate, but I hope for the best and act like an ostrich.

Mary McCarthy in Retrospect

Joseph Epstein

"I DIDN'T have the two top things—great animal magnetism or money," F. Scott Fitzgerald once remarked. "I had the two second things, though, good looks and intelligence." Mary McCarthy (1912-89), like Fitzgerald—like him, too, in being half-Irish on her father's side—could say the same. Only those two qualities, good looks and intelligence, can take on a very different significance in a woman. Good looks in a man, especially in a man doing intellectual or artistic work, can prove a mixed blessing; they can issue in narcissism or petty vanity and often even suggest an underlying weakness. But good looks in a woman, especially an intellectually gifted woman, can seem more than a touch anomalous: it is almost as if beauty would make a woman's possession of intellectual ability appear surprising. To have both, surely, is an insult to Freud's theory of sublimation, which holds that artists give up money, fame, and beautiful lovers for their art, through which they hope to win—yes, you will have guessed it—money, fame, and beautiful lovers.

The two intellectual women whose careers have had the greatest publicity in America over the past half-century, Mary McCarthy and Susan Sontag, have both been striking-looking: Mary McCarthy on the model of the natural American beauty, Susan Sontag, more academically, on the model of the bohemian graduate-student lover every bookish man feels he ought to have had. If all this sounds unbearably sexist, or plain masculine stupid, do stop a moment to consider whether Miss McCarthy's or Miss Sontag's career would have been the same if either had been 4'10," weighed 165 pounds, had sandy-colored frizzy hair, and wore largish round spectacles.

Whether she was writing criticism, fiction, or political pamphlets, Mary McCarthy always wrote, my guess is, with the authority of beauty on her side. When she grew older, her looks disappeared and she came to resemble a rather harrowing Irish old-maid public-school principal, but what never disappeared, I would guess again, was the consciousness of having once been beau-

tiful. Dark, with good facial bones, a fine forehead, and a heart-stopping smile, she was, from the outset of her career, a star: she was this beautiful woman who wrote in a knowing way about so much, not least about sexual experience—her own sexual experience, one always assumed, which made the whole proposition even more enticing.

So intrinsic were Mary McCarthy's good looks to her career that everything about the literary persona at the center of that career seemed to proclaim: "I am not your standard emotionally crippled, intellectual female who has drifted into art or criticism because nothing better was available to her." In the best of her stories, "The Man in the Brooks Brothers Shirt" (1941), Miss McCarthy made plain, through her transparently autobiographical heroine, Margaret Sargent, her own queenly standing in the first world she chose to dominate, that of the New York intellectuals in the 1930's.

As for the men who sought her favors in this group, in one way or another, the narrator of the story reports, "They were all of them lame ducks":

The handsome ones, like her fiancé, were good-for-nothing, the reliable ones, like her [about-to-be-ex-] husband, were peculiar-looking, the well-to-do ones were short and wore lifts in their shoes or fat with glasses, the clever ones were alcoholic or slightly homosexual, the serious ones were foreigners or else wore beards or black shirts or were desperately poor and had no table manners. Somehow each of them was handicapped for American life and therefore humble in love. And was she too disqualified, did she really belong to this fraternity of cripples, or was she not a sound and normal woman who had been spending her life in self-imposed exile, a princess among the trolls?

One thing that needs to be said about this passage is that it was written about people, the editors and writers around the magazine *Partisan Review*, who had given Mary McCarthy what literary success she had had up to the time she wrote it. What was more, she still wrote for *Partisan Review*, still saw socially the people she was mocking so thoroughly, and still thought of them as friends. "Dear Jesus," a frightened Margaret Sargent says in another context, "I'm really as

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hard as nails." Although she teetered on the edge of nervous breakdown at various times in her life, Mary McCarthy was herself hard as nails; and over the years, as she lost the trepidation she once had, she became even harder. From a princess among the trolls, it could be argued, she turned into a queen of the trolls.

In her defense, it ought to be noted that Mary McCarthy played in a league with some fairly tough guys. The true art form of the intellectuals around *Partisan Review* was the crushing put-down—of one another. William Phillips, for example, once called Mary McCarthy, when she was living with Philip Rahv, his co-editor on *Partisan Review*, Rahv's "alter-Iago." Mary McCarthy herself referred to the garrulous art historian Meyer Schapiro as "a mouth looking for an ear." When McCarthy published her collection of stories, *The Company She Keeps* (1942), the poet Delmore Schwartz suggested it ought to be retitled "Tidings from the Whore."

In his memoir *The Truants*, William Barrett, the best chronicler of New York intellectual life in this period, though far from admiring of McCarthy, does allow that she had entered a man's world and was able to "hold her own with men—both intellectually and sexually." Refusing to admit what others might have thought the natural vulnerability of a woman, Mary McCarthy gave rather better than she got.

How much she gave and what she got in return we now know in extensive detail, thanks to Carol Brightman's *Writing Dangerously: Mary McCarthy and Her World*.^{*} This is the third full biography devoted to Mary McCarthy but the first to have appeared since her death—and the first, therefore, able really to dish the dirt, as McCarthy's generation of Vassar girls might have put it. As she herself made clear in her fiction, Miss McCarthy's was not a scandal-free life, and though not all the players in her personal pageant have shuffled off the stage, many things about her life could not have been written about until after her death. Miss Brightman, a Vassar girl herself, is not at all chary of playing kiss-and-tell in the manner of contemporary biographers—that is, her subject did all the kissing and now she does all the telling.

Carol Brightman interviewed Mary McCarthy many times before her death in 1989, and, she gives us to believe, became quite friendly with her. As a biographer, though, she takes the odd position of seeming to admire her subject in general while reserving the right to dislike her in most of her particulars. She realizes, for example, that much of Mary McCarthy's fiction is quite still-born, and she is not afraid to say so, or to offer reasons why this might be.

Miss Brightman also brings her own politics to this biography of an intellectual who spent so much of her own energy on politics. Miss Bright-

man's politics are for the most part standard New Left—she edited the journal *Viet-Report* during the Vietnam war—with a special emphasis on anti-anti-Communism. In some circles, apparently, even after the fall of Communism—a doctrine that made for more human misery, individual and collective, than any in the history of the world—to be an anti-Communist can still be held as a mark against an intellectual, and it is in these circles that Carol Brightman travels.

Mary McCarthy was an anti-Stalinist, and, except for a brief Trotskyite phase and with certain qualifications, an anti-Communist she remained until the Vietnam war, when her politics took a sharp turn and her anti-Communism was displaced by her anti-Americanism. Only after this displacement has been made does her biographer begin to feel a full political kinship with her—a kinship she distinctly does not feel with other intellectuals around *Partisan Review* or with members of the Congress for Cultural Freedom or indeed with anyone who saw Communism as a distinct menace, both in itself and to the world. Miss Brightman's notion of a truly malevolent character is Sidney Hook, her notion of evil incarnate is the CIA.

One of the cleverest methods for putting off a biographer is to write a brilliant autobiography. Mary McCarthy did not quite manage this. She wrote three different autobiographical volumes: *Memoirs of a Catholic Girlhood* (1954), *How I Grew* (1987), and *Intellectual Memoirs* (posthumously published in 1992). The best of these is *Memoirs of a Catholic Girlhood*, where she tells of her parents' death in the flu epidemic of 1918, leaving her, then six years old, and her three brothers orphans. Her account of her tyrannous Aunt Margaret and Uncle Myers, under whose roof in Minneapolis she spent six years, and then of her life in Seattle with her more cultivated Preston grandparents (her Preston grandmother was Jewish) remains an impressive piece of work and probably her best book.

The other two autobiographical volumes are drier, sketchier, less satisfying. *Intellectual Memoirs*, however, is notable for its pages on Miss McCarthy's sex life; it includes a brief exegesis on the size and shape of various male members (not of parliament) and her account of having once slept with three different men within a 24-hour period, which in hockey and among libertines is known as the hat trick.

THE daughter and granddaughter of the most beautiful women of their respective generations in Seattle, Mary McCarthy was herself, in the old botanical metaphor, deflowered at the age of fourteen by a man nearly twice her age. She went on to have four marriages and claimed to have slept with more than 100

^{*} Clarkson Potter, 714 pp., \$30.00.

different men. This notable propensity on her part for contemplating the ceiling is psychologically interesting, because Mary McCarthy did not, as Carol Brightman points out, seem to take all that much pleasure in sex. Nor do the various heroines in her fiction. In her best-known novel *The Group* (1963), the uncomplicated enjoyment of sex seems to be reserved for the healthily insentient. When, in "The Man in the Brooks Brothers Shirt," Margaret Sargent decides to sleep with the stranger she has met on the train, Miss McCarthy describes her decision thus: "She had felt tired and kind and thought, why not?"

Like most talented women, Mary McCarthy was no feminist, either when young or in her later years. She felt feminism "bad for women," for she thought it born of desperation and that "it induces a very bad emotional state." What she was instead was a liberated woman—liberated chiefly in the sexual realm, but not there alone. Among her Vassar classmates (class of '33), Miss McCarthy was considered smart, sarcastic, sophisticated, very daring. While a freshman, she spent weekends in New York living with Harold Johnsrud, an actor and would-be playwright who was to be her first husband; the summer of her senior year, she moved in with him. This was an audacious thing to have done in that day, though a classmate later suggested that, having no parents, Miss McCarthy had less to fear socially than other Vassar girls.

Vassar was a key experience for Mary McCarthy. It was a place of greater prestige than it became after admitting men in 1969 and diluting its snobbery. Even as late as the 1950's, a Vassar girl was a condition, a station in life. "Vassar girls, in general," thinks one of the characters in *The Group*, "were not liked by the world at large; they had come to be a sort of symbol of superiority." At Vassar, even someone as rebellious as Mary McCarthy kept the fact that she had a Jewish grandmother from her classmates; it was, in those purloins, bad enough to be half-Irish. On weekends at the country estates of her classmates, McCarthy had a chance to see how the other 1 percent lived.

"Vassar," writes Carol Brightman, "supplied Mary McCarthy with a pedigree, by osmosis." Today Mary McCarthy's name is to Vassar as F. Scott Fitzgerald's is to Princeton: two quite uncharacteristic students whose later success has come to identify them thoroughly with their respective schools. Astonishing to report, such was her fame later in life that Miss McCarthy was offered the presidency of Vassar in 1985.

Mary McCarthy graduated Phi Beta Kappa and *cum laude* in 1933. She married Johnsrud that summer, and immediately felt "I had *done the wrong thing*." She felt something similar when, five years later, she agreed to marry the famous critic Edmund Wilson, the motive for doing which, nearly 40 years after the fact, she claimed

still not to be able to puzzle out. In her essay "My Confession" (1953), she notes:

The "great" decisions—those I can look back on pensively and say, "That was a turning point"—have been made without my awareness. Too late to do anything about it, I have chosen.

She goes on to say that this is all the more striking when the choice has been political or historic, but to make two marriages passively seems to me more remarkable still, especially from a writer known above all for her cool analytical power.

Mary McCarthy was someone much impressed by the role of accident in life. In "My Confession," she also discusses the accidental way she came to politics. After her marriage, she did a bit of book reviewing for the *New Republic* and the *Nation*, though for the most part not on heavily political subjects. She had the normal young person's instinct to favor the underdog, and this put her on the side of the convicted anarchists Sacco and Vanzetti and of the radical labor leader Tom Mooney. Her husband, she claims, had "social anger in him," owing to his father's having lost a job in an academic scandal. Being around theatrical people, she and her husband "began to take part in a left-wing life, to which we felt superior, which we laughed at, but which nevertheless was influencing us without our being aware of it." She and Johnsrud, in evening clothes, picketed on behalf of striking waiters at the Waldorf. But the Communist-party members and fellow-travelers they saw, she allows, "knew we were . . . un-serious, politically."

WHEN the Moscow trials were in the news in the mid-30's, Miss McCarthy was off in Reno, waiting out a divorce—she and Johnsrud each had many love affairs on their marriage's road to ruin—and knew nothing about them. At a party upon her return to New York, in what she thought was a standard cocktail-party argument, she said that Leon Trotsky was entitled to a fair hearing to defend himself against the accusation that he had betrayed the revolution. A few days later, she found her name on the stationery of the Trotsky Defense Committee. Offended, she was about to write to ask that her name be removed when she was suddenly harassed by late-night phone calls from Communist-party sympathizers advising her to disassociate herself from the Committee. Being naturally contrarian in spirit, she decided to remain a member.

Where before she had been either indifferent or vaguely pro-Communist, she was now anti-Stalinist. She found herself arguing Trotsky's case at parties. To argue it better, she had to read up on the Moscow trials and, from there, on the history of Communism. She never became a Marxist, and in "My Confession" remarks, in a nice

Mary McCarthy touch, that Marxism "was something you had to take up young, like ballet dancing." In "My Confession," too, she claims that, never having been a Communist, she came by her anti-Communism naturally, through thoughtfulness and reason, so that it had nothing of the "vindicating or vindictive character" of someone who had been badly deceived by the party.

Mary McCarthy describes her siding with the Trotskyites as "the pivotal decision of my life." Politics certainly changed her social life. She ceased to see conventional people, who "included anyone who could hear of the Moscow trials and maintain an unruffled serenity." Many of the social habits of the recent Vassar graduate were now set aside. She read the *New York Times* instead of the *Herald-Tribune*, and

soon I stopped doing crossword puzzles, playing bridge, reading detective stories and popular novels. I did not "give up" these things; they departed from me, as it were, on tiptoe, seeing that my thoughts were elsewhere.

Still, there were people who thought that Mary McCarthy was not fundamentally in earnest about politics. Nancy Macdonald, the first wife of Dwight Macdonald, the intellectual journalist, told Brightman that Mary "liked the *idea* of being political, but I don't think she was terribly serious about it." Brightman's own view is that "a curiosity born of social ambition" propelled her into radical politics.

Through James T. Farrell, whose novel *Studs Lonigan* she had reviewed, Mary McCarthy met the editors and writers who had recently captured *Partisan Review* from the Communist party. Her Trotskyite dalliance naturally put her into the *Partisan Review* orbit; the Trotskyites, McCarthy herself said, had all the beautiful girls. "My dear," she wrote to a Vassar classmate, "I've got the most Levantine lover!" She was referring to Philip Rahv (born Ivan Greenberg), as a boy brought to this country from Russia via a short detour in Palestine, with whom she soon moved in. It was, pronounced Rahv of the arrangement, making a nice little Trotskyite joke, "class war in one apartment." Among the *PR* crowd, McCarthy later wrote, "the only pleasures that were taken seriously were sex and arguing." Marxism and modernism were their meat and drink; Payne Whitney, the psychiatric clinic, their Grossinger's.

Sustained by a belief in the importance of art and ideas—the editors of *Partisan Review* argued about whether they were for or against World War II as if they were themselves, say, Sweden—these intellectuals turned *PR* into a magazine of great significance. To have appeared in its pages with sufficient brilliance could be the making of a young writer: and such it was for, among others, Delmore Schwartz, Saul Bellow, Clement Greenberg, and Mary McCarthy. At Vassar, one of McCarthy's favorite teachers had suggested that she

eschew imaginative literature in favor of criticism, and it was as a theater critic that, urged on by Rahv, she first appeared in *Partisan Review*. The provocative dash of her writing, appearing alongside work by André Gide, George Orwell, T.S. Eliot, and Wallace Stevens, was plainly the making of Mary McCarthy. In her reviews she first established her formidability as someone sharp, authoritative, clearly not to be fooled with.

IT WAS also in *Partisan Review*'s office in 1937 that Miss McCarthy met Edmund Wilson. He was then forty-two, she twenty-five. He was already established as the most powerful literary critic in America. She was a girl with an eye perpetually peeled for the main chance. If there is a literary-criticism equivalent of the old Hollywood producer's casting couch, Miss McCarthy landed on Wilson's. Having done so, she decided to go ahead and marry him, or so she later reported in connection with her disavowal of any love felt for him then or at any other time. Rahv, with whom she was then living, was astonished to learn that she now planned to marry Wilson. It is not clear that he ought to have been. William Phillips later claimed not to be; in an interview with Miss Brightman, he reported: "I just assumed that [Mary] thought Wilson a more interesting figure than Rahv."

Death often turns the hard-hearted sentimental, and so Mary McCarthy turned when Rahv died in 1973. In the *New York Times Book Review*, she wrote about the tender, feminine side of his mind and his childlike sense of wonder at the world, comparing him at the close of her piece to Tolstoy's Pierre Bezukhov, that dear, good-hearted, and awkward idealist in *War and Peace*. But in her novel *The Oasis* (1949), under the transparent veil that fiction would almost always be to her, she describes a character named Will Taub (not much of a disguise, even syllabically, for Phil Rahv) as a pure type of the operator and opportunist, a thoroughly dreary and, but for his comic ineptitude, possibly dangerous fellow whose powers of understanding were defied by such things as "children, birds, cows, water, snakes, lightning, Gentiles, and automobiles." So great was Rahv's fury at this portrait that, according to Miss Brightman, he initiated a lawsuit, alleging 132 violations of his rights, which he later dropped.

In *Intellectual Memoirs*, McCarthy reports Wilson telling her that "Rahv doesn't *do* anything for you," while marrying him would "do something" for her. Her own explanation for marrying Wilson is a quasi-Marxist one: he seemed closer to her own social class. Miss Brightman weighs in with a quasi-Freudian explanation: that the older Wilson seemed a possible replacement for her recently deceased Preston grandfather, though, as it turned out, in him she came closer to finding a replacement for her villainous Uncle Myers.

The Mary McCarthy-Edmund Wilson marriage has long been a subject of literary curiosity. How could two such strong temperaments possibly get along within the constrictions of a marriage? The answer is that they could not. Screaming was their normal mode of discourse. Wilson beat her up; she kicked and scratched him. When she became pregnant with his child, Wilson tried to talk her into an abortion. The summer that Wilson taught at the University of Chicago, their neighbors in Hyde Park twice had to call the police to stop the couple's violent arguments. As a final touch, Wilson had McCarthy briefly committed, as insane, to Payne Whitney, in a manner she describes in *The Group*, where she switches the blame for this act to her first husband. The marriage lasted seven years, which, in retrospect, given the hell each made for the other, seems remarkably long-lived.

Still, as the punchline from the old Jewish joke has it, "It wasn't a total loss." Wilson thought Mary's talent lay not in criticism but in imaginative writing, and McCarthy herself later remarked that "I would never have written fiction if it hadn't been for [Wilson]." Writing fiction gave her a literary cachet that she could never have earned through criticism alone—though today, with the exception of some of the stories in *The Company She Keeps*, McCarthy's fiction seems almost exclusively of narrow, by now largely historical, interest. Because of her propensity for plagiarizing from life in her fiction, she acquired the reputation of being a scandalous writer. But more important, had she not written criticism, her fiction would never have received the attention it did; and had she not written fiction, her criticism would not have had quite the authority it did.

MARY MCCARTHY married twice more after her marriage to Wilson: first to Bowden Broadwater, a man eight years younger than she with a nice nose for scandal who lived on the edges of New York cultural life and who she later claimed not to have known was bisexual; and, finally and apparently happily, to a minor American diplomatic official named James West. In both marriages, she was clearly the primary party: daily life was organized around her needs, concerns, whims. This was owing to her growing fame and the power it carried with it. By the late 1940's, her work began appearing in the *New Yorker*, and she was becoming a writer of national reputation, a personage, a figure, a force.

During the late 1940's and early 1950's, too, Mary McCarthy began to Europeanize herself. The Italian writer Nicola Chiaromonte became a great friend of hers; so, too, did Hannah Arendt, the German-Jewish philosopher then living in America whom McCarthy's son would later call his mother's intellectual conscience, which does not say much for either of them. She took teaching jobs at Bard and Sarah Lawrence. She made

the inevitable connections with Bernard Berenson and Isaiah Berlin, intellectual figures with great social prestige. She shucked off the last vestiges of intellectual bohemianism and began to dress expensively. Along the way, Paul Tillich, the theologian, made passes at her, Igor Stravinsky pursued her; she had an affair with a now-forgotten London journalist named John Davenport, and dropped her third husband (Bowden Broadwater). She wrote intellectually thin books about Venice and Florence. ("But, my dear," said Berenson, "what do you *know* about Florence?") Under the strain of all this, she underwent depression and near nervous breakdown, waking up one morning in Florence believing that she *was* the English publisher George Weidenfeld.

According to Miss Brightman, Mary McCarthy's reputation really took off with the publication of *Memoirs of a Catholic Girlhood* in 1957. Publishers began to besiege her. She no longer needed to think of herself as part of a narrow band of New York intellectuals—"the boys from over the bridges," as Hannah Arendt, with a fine touch of snobbery, called the *Partisan Review* crowd, referring to their origins in Brooklyn and the Bronx. William Shawn, of the *New Yorker*, wanted to send her to Jerusalem. She was sought out for interviews.

The Group, published in 1963, was the big Mary McCarthy novel everyone had been waiting for but not many important critics—important, that is, to her—much liked it. Important critics did not, however, keep it from being a best-seller through much of 1963 and well into 1964. It was widely translated, and, according to Miss Brightman, as of 1991, "more than 5.2 million copies had been sold worldwide." Part of the book's immense popular success was owing to its scandalousness (for its day): it was early out of the gate in describing sex from a woman's point of view; it provided an interesting sociology of the diaphragm (not the first appearance of this device in Mary McCarthy's fiction); it offered an upper-class American lesbian as a main character. The novel also presented some extended glimpses into upper-class life, viewed with appropriate wonder, of a kind not uncommon in fiction written by the American Irish.

The Group chronicles portions of the lives of six graduates of the Vassar class of '33. It begins with the wedding of Kay Strong (the Mary McCarthy character) and ends, roughly eight years later, at her funeral. (She dies falling out of a window at the Vassar Club in Manhattan.) Kay's death is not merely the chief but perhaps the only surprise in the novel. McCarthy's main effort is bent on showing how her characters live, which includes what they wear and eat and how they act and make love. The book is richly laden with facts, but there is something hollow at its center. It is more intent on sociology than on fiction. But today's sociology turns out to be

yesterday's news, and yesterday's news is what *The Group* reads like today.

CAROL BRIGHTMAN believes that Mary McCarthy's "limitation as a novelist is a failure of imagination," by which she means that McCarthy never really was able to let go, to "reach beyond personal experience into the impersonal realm of the imagination." I prefer the explanation offered by Randall Jarrell in his novel *Pictures from an Institution*. There, Jarrell has a novelist whom he names Gertrude Johnson and who, though Jarrell never admitted it, seems to have been modeled on Mary McCarthy. Gertrude knows a great many facts but nothing of human emotions: she can tell you the name of the furniture polish a child has swallowed but not how the child feels as it seizes and swallows the polish. Of Gertrude, Jarrell, devastatingly, writes:

If she was superior to most people in her courage and independence, in her intelligence, in her reckless wit, in her extraordinary powers of observation, in her almost eidetic memory, she was inferior to them in most human qualities; she had not yet arrived even at that elementary forbearance upon which human society is based.

Edmund Wilson, when he was married to her, prophesied that Mary McCarthy would become the female Stendhal. But in her fiction the magic never kicked in. She was instead content to use fiction to settle old scores or to preach her opinions—establishing, once again, her own superiority. This propensity grew even greater as she grew older, and mars her last two novels—*Birds of America* (1971) and *Cannibals and Missionaries* (1979)—to the point of making them quite unreadable. Writing about George Orwell, Mary McCarthy speculated that "maybe he did not have enough human weakness to be a real novelist." Insufficient human weakness was not Miss McCarthy's problem; escaping her weakness in the realm of art was.

With the money earned from *The Group*, Mary McCarthy was able to transform herself from the hard-hearted vamp into the *grande dame* of American letters. With her fourth husband, she now took up permanent residence in Paris, returning only for the summer months to a house she had bought in Castine, Maine. The French press referred to her as "*la Simone de Beauvoir américaine*," which, since she detested Simone de Beauvoir, must have rankled. In her book *America Day by Day*, de Beauvoir referred to Mary McCarthy, without mentioning her by name, as "that beautiful and cold novelist who has already gone through three husbands and several lovers in the course of a cleverly laid out career."

The Vietnam war came along just in time to revivify Miss McCarthy. She had in any case been drifting away from anti-Communism, and revela-

tions that the CIA had helped support the English monthly *Encounter* and other liberal anti-Communist endeavors put her further outside its traditional orbit. When the *New York Review of Books*, which had positioned itself as an anti-anti-Communist paper and of which McCarthy was one of the great figures, offered to send her to Vietnam to write six articles on the war for \$1,000 an article, she agreed to go.

In "The Genial Host," one of the stories in *The Company She Keeps*, the Mary McCarthy character remarks that behind her own politics was a temperamental attraction to unpopular causes:

When you were young, it had been the South, the Dauphin, Bonnie Prince Charlie; later it was Debs and now Trotsky that you loved. You admired this romantic trait in yourself and you would confess humorously: "All I have to do is be *for* somebody and he loses."

This time, in taking up the position she did on the war in Vietnam, she had chosen both a popular and a winning cause.

Read today, Miss McCarthy's little book *Hanoi* makes fairly plain that she had taken the short but decisive step from being against the Vietnam war to being *for* North Vietnam. She is probably correct when she remarks, in the polemical preface to this book, that "the power of intellectuals, sadly limited, is to persuade, not to provide against contingencies." But intellectuals, as a type, are never more repulsive than when deciding, at least in print, the fate of thousands on no greater basis than the yearning for the tidiness of their own logic.

A very poor performance, Mary McCarthy's in Hanoi, as she describes the cheerful, bustling people of North Vietnam, persevering in the face of American monstrosity. Conditions in Hanoi are ever judged superior to those in Saigon. Auschwitz is brought up in connection with American bombing. In a letter to Dwight Macdonald she had characterized Communism in North Vietnam as "virtuous tyranny," adding that "I have enough tyranny in me to respond to the appeal." But she really felt that she had a great deal of virtue, too. For in accounting for her motives in going to Hanoi, she writes: "I could not bear to see my country disfigure itself so, when I might do something to stop it." But then her love for her own country would seem to be rather ambiguous, for in her preface she stipulates that "the alternatives to Communism offered by the Western countries are all ugly in their own ways and getting uglier."

So important did correct views on Vietnam come to loom for her that she even judged dead writers on what positions, had they been alive, they might have taken on the war there. In her essay "The Writing on the Wall," George Orwell, the most important political writer of her generation, flunked the test. She found his "belligerent

anti-Communism" disqualifying and, in an early act of political correctness, read him out of the canon of acceptable writers.

AS LONG as she remained alive, Mary McCarthy was a formidable presence in American literary life, even though her books garnered fewer and fewer praising reviews and seemed less the intellectual events they once had been. She wrote about the trial of Captain Ernest Medina, the American officer who commanded the troops responsible for the My Lai massacre, and, later, about the Watergate hearings, both of which gave her plenty of opportunity to vent her distaste for American life. At her summer home in Maine, she played the *grande dame* to the full, insisting on formal ritual; "The Duchess of Castine" is the title of Miss Brightman's chapter on her life in Maine. She made a tremendous fuss about food, and saw in American white bread and supermarkets the fall of the West.

Past sixty now, not always a fine age for a once-beautiful woman, she wrote memoirs, learned nearly monthly of the death of former friends, attended to her own illnesses. Her last few years were haunted by a lawsuit for libel that the playwright Lillian Hellman—whom McCarthy had detested for decades both as a writer and as an old apologist for Stalinism—launched against her for saying, on the Dick Cavett television show, that "every word [Hellman] writes is a lie, including 'and' and 'the'"; the suit was only dropped when Hellman died. Many people felt the two women richly deserved each other.

"I still haven't *succeeded*," Mary McCarthy told Miss Brightman two years before lung cancer swept her off the board at seventy-seven. But Miss Brightman does believe hers was a success of sorts. "It is her respect for words and their mysteries that makes her literary example worth pondering," writes Miss Brightman, trying to save something from the long life of her subject. "The peculiar intensity of McCarthy's prose, the authority one feels behind its observations and judgments, comes in part from a scrupulous commit-

ment to accurate expression." The critical essay rather than the novel, everyone seemed to agree, was her true form. "She was our most brilliant literary critic," Gore Vidal wrote, in a compliment with a dagger of malice added, because she was "uncorrupted by compassion."

Yet Hazlitt says that true taste is demonstrated by enthusiasm, and by this test Miss McCarthy, as a critic, does not fare very well. Her friend Dwight Macdonald once remarked that every time he said Yes he got in trouble. Mary McCarthy did not do much better. As a critic, she became a champion of William Burroughs's novel *Naked Lunch* (not at her house in Castine was lunch likely to be so served); she thought Guenter Grass's *The Tin Drum* "a new genre"; she claimed to admire the fictional experiments of Nathalie Sarraute; she wrote an elaborate explication of Vladimir Nabokov's overly elaborate box-within-a-box novel *Pale Fire*; she tried to make a case for the greatness of Ivy Compton-Burnett. But it is by her devastations—of the American playwrights, of J.D. Salinger, of Simone de Beauvoir—that she is best remembered, though probably not much longer, in good part because, ironically, she herself helped to kill interest in these subjects.

Although Mary McCarthy seems to have given more pain than pleasure in her daily dealings with the world, considered as the adventures of a woman essentially alone in life, hers is a career worthy of contemplation. In *Memoirs of a Catholic Girlhood*, she speaks of the importance for her, as a little girl, of wanting to be noticed. For several decades, with the aid chiefly of strong clear prose and clean good looks and the force of personality, this woman was able to command the attention of whatever world she happened to reside in at the moment. She made a great stir in her day but now that the stir is over and the attention withdrawn, interest in her work is all but completely drained. Her life, viewed in retrospect, seems rather sad, but not without meaning: good looks and intelligence, those ostensibly great gifts, if not accompanied by an understanding heart, are by themselves not enough, either in literature or in life.

The Nerve of Ruth Wisse

Edward Alexander

"RUTH WISSE is worth a battalion." This I heard at Tel Aviv University from a graduate student of mine with some expertise in military matters, being a colonel in the Israeli army. Her remark, astute in 1988, seems in retrospect positively prescient as a characterization of Wisse's heroic new book, *If I Am Not for Myself . . . The Liberal Betrayal of the Jews*.^{*} For Wisse, the eminent Harvard scholar of Yiddish literature and long-time contributor to COMMENTARY, is ever mindful of the obligations of warfare—obligations which, she contends, liberals in general and many Jewish liberals in particular have dodged:

The defense of Israel against the Arabs, as against earlier anti-Semites, would require of liberals the kind of sustained exertion in the realm of ideas and political action that Israelis have had to manifest in the military defense of their country. Instead, many liberals sacrifice the Jews to liberal pieties and find that Israel is no longer a worthy cause.

While always keeping in mind the fact that she is fighting on the North American and not on the Israeli front, Ruth Wisse, more than anyone else I know, has shouldered her obligations in this war.

If I Am Not for Myself begins with a letter from the author to a friend who has left Canada (where Wisse herself used to live and teach) to settle in Israel. Wisse then appears to change course and abandons the epistolary form for a series of discrete chapters about the varied aspects of the liberal surrender to

the forces arrayed against the Jewish national enterprise. Wisse is herself a kind of liberal, a liberal "tempered," as Matthew Arnold once said of himself, "by experience, reflection, and renouncement." For this reason, and because every chapter returns, in its own way, to what she calls "the connecting dramatic link between moral courage in personal life and in politics," the whole book takes on a highly personal—or, better, familial—tone, and may be read, indeed, as an extended, if often broken-hearted, love letter.

Essentially, Wisse's book seeks to explain why and how the Arabs in the last two-and-a-half decades have succeeded in turning upside-down the world's (especially the liberal world's) view of the "conflict" between themselves and the Jews in the Middle East. The master stroke of their strategy, she argues, was to expand their war from the battlefield, where they had failed to live up to their own traditions of military prowess, to the realm of ideas, where Jews had traditionally been dominant. To prosecute this latter war they relied upon a strategy of inversion.

Thus, having refused to admit a Jewish state into a region they designated as exclusively theirs, the Arab nations now accused the Jews of refusing to accept an Arab (Palestinian) state; having launched several wars, perpetrated countless terrorist attacks, and maintained an international boycott, the Arabs now accused Israel of aggression against them. Guilty of exploiting Palestinian Arab refugees and treating them as human refuse, they blamed Israel for the condition of homelessness they had themselves created and fostered. Zionism, the Jewish aspiration for

a homeland, they "declared racist because it deprived Palestinian Arabs of *their* homeland."

By inverting the terms of their struggle against Israel, by shifting from the goal of "turning the Mediterranean red with Jewish blood" (the battle cry of 1967) to the pretended search for a haven for the homeless, the Arabs also succeeded in transferring the rhetoric of their opposition to Israel from the Right to the Left. The Arab oppressors had become the oppressed, the aggressors the aggrieved-against. In so doing they made a calculated appeal to Western liberalism with its core beliefs in fairness, in the redress of grievance, and in the negotiability of all conflicts, however seemingly intractable.

The fundamental premise of Wisse's argument is that this appeal has succeeded. And the reason is that when liberals—including Jewish liberals—are forced to choose between, on the one hand, their faith in rationality and the progressive improvement of mankind, and, on the other hand, the Jews, they will invariably choose the former. It will always be easier, she argues, to blame or discredit the Jews, "a very tiny people," than to come to their defense, especially if doing so requires rethinking liberal ideas.

RUTH WISSE is by no means the first to remark that liberalism has a "Jewish problem." In 1878, the great English novelist George Eliot observed that, among her contemporaries,

anti-Judaic advocates usually belong to a party which has felt itself glorified in winning for Jews . . . the full privileges of citizenship.

Like Wisse, Eliot observed the paradox of "liberal gentlemen" routinely blaming the Jews themselves for the inability of liberalism to protect them. Eliot also foreshadowed Wisse in noting how

^{*} Free Press, 225 pp., \$22.95.

EDWARD ALEXANDER has recently published *With Friends Like These . . . The Jewish Critics of Israel* (SPI Books).

Jews, alone of all modern peoples, were not allowed by liberals to declare their national allegiances. "Why," asked Eliot,

are we so eager for the dignity of certain populations of whom . . . we have never seen a single specimen . . . while we sneer at the notion of a renovated national dignity for the Jews?

If Western liberals in general became unsympathetic to the fate of the Jews because it contradicted their sanguine view of the world, the tenacity of the Arabs' rejection of Israel was bound to cause a sizable defection of Jewish liberals in particular. Feeling themselves in some sense the target of the Arab campaign to destroy Israel's moral image—a campaign aggressively pursued in universities and schools, in churches, in news media, in publishing houses, in professional organizations—many American Jewish liberals sought to escape the negative role in which they were being cast by the alleged misdeeds of Israel. Indeed, the more the Arab nations and organizations were able to discredit Israel,

the more Jews outside Israel tried to win back their own popularity by proving their innocence. The paradoxical political behavior of American Jews could . . . be described as the desire to dissociate oneself from a people under attack by advertising one's own goodness.

Hence the spectacle, surely unique in history, of vocal members of an ethnic minority in America obsessively and publicly disclaiming responsibility for the supposed wrongdoing of their own people's homeland. Just imagine, writes Wisse, a Polish-American organization lobbying against aid to Poland the way the Jewish Peace Lobby and New Jewish Agenda lobby against Israel and on behalf of the PLO, or (to add an example not adduced by Wisse) American Catholics negotiating with Britain on the conflict in Ulster as American Jews like the lawyer Rita Hauser "negotiate" with the PLO.

And, finally, it has not only been Jewish liberals in America who have fallen victim to the Arab war of ideas. Wisse also indicts those

Israelis who, under the pressure generated by the attack on their country's legitimacy, have acquired a habit of differentiating between two Zionisms, the pure and good Zionism of "ingathering" versus the evil Zionism of "expansionism." As she notes, the Israeli intellectuals most prized in the West are those who, failing to temper self-criticism with self-respect, tend instead to acquiesce in the erasure of geographical perspective and historical fact that characterizes anti-Zionist propaganda. Among them she singles out the writer David Grossman, who in his chronicle *The Yellow Wind* incorporates the ultimate Arab improvement upon old-fashioned anti-Semitism—namely, the wholesale embezzlement of the symbols and terms of Jewish history and consciousness, so that Palestinian Arabs now "replace" Jews.

In short, never has a book so relentlessly unmasked the evasions, the flummery, the cowardice parading as courage that have long characterized a certain species of Jewish liberalism. With surgical precision Wisse cuts through the cant of "moral strutters" who, by making Israel's existence contingent upon its being a "light unto the nations," licentiously equate the divine election of the Jew to receive the Law with the anti-Semitic selection of the modern Jew as the prime target of international discrimination.

Nor is Wisse merely "negative" in her approach. She persistently and passionately celebrates the implicit universalism of Jewish "particularity" as against the repressiveness of internationalist idealism; she shows how Jewish nationalism, not Jewish socialism, has been the powerful force of liberation in this century; and she demonstrates how, in contrast to the absurd (and implicitly racist) notions of a "Jewish" socialism or a "Jewish" humanism, only the traditional idea of a Jewish way of life is open to all people alike, a "tree of life" to any who will take hold of it.

If I Am Not for Myself is a triumph of moral reasoning, a necessary and indispensable utterance on the contemporary Jewish condi-

tion, and a work of true elegance of mind. How can it be, then, that another elegant mind—one of the most elegant it has been my privilege to know since we were in college together several decades ago—has excoriated this book as "scurrilous," "perverse," "tendentious," "strident," "unpleasant," and (with hammering insistence) "paranoid"?

The author of this attack, Robert Alter, is, like Ruth Wisse, a regular, veteran contributor to COMMENTARY. A professor of Hebrew and comparative literature at Berkeley, he has, in his studies of the Hebrew Bible, given us new eyes with which to read the ancient texts; he has been the foremost interpreter of modern Hebrew literature in this country; and in his general literary criticism he has done much to restore our waning faith in literature as a means of encouraging humane understanding. He has, moreover, long been a committed Zionist (who in 1991 had the distinction of being singled out for vilification by Noam Chomsky's fanatically anti-Zionist followers in San Francisco).

Yet despite the values they share, Wisse's book touched a raw nerve of anger in Alter, and in a lengthy review-essay in the *New Republic* (November 30, 1992) he failed to find in it even one sentence of redeeming value. In Alter's reading, Wisse had grossly erred by suggesting that all criticism of Israel was "motivated by a sick or cynical complicity with the enemy"; had failed to distinguish between leftists and liberals, anti-Zionist propagandists like Chomsky and "staunch friends" like the sociologist Nathan Glazer; had falsely indicted all modern Israeli writers on the basis of half-a-dozen texts; had misrepresented the character of Arab hostility toward Israel as continuous with European anti-Semitism; had forgotten, in her zeal to attack liberalism, that the liberal democracies have not only conferred great benefits upon the Jews of the West but also destroyed the lethal anti-Semitism of the Hitler and Stalin regimes; and, finally, had flouted the heroic aspiration of Zionism to "normalization," which means, among

other things, dispensing with Diaspora Jewry's "pathological" fears about omnipresent enemies.

It is precisely to such a pathology that Alter ascribes Wisse's own alleged failures of discrimination and balance. He accuses her of suffering from a deranging obsession, which he encapsulates in the statement: "Wisse is convinced that every day is Masada."

Unfortunately, this imputation of "Masada"-like paranoia reminds one of an earlier and rather sorry episode in Alter's career as an occasional commentator on Jewish politics.

In the July 1973 issue of COMMENTARY, Alter published an article, "The Masada Complex." It was provoked by the columnist Stewart Alsop's accusation that Israel (in the person of Prime Minister Golda Meir) was then "creating its own Masada" by failing to respond positively to Egyptian "overtures." To which Meir had retorted: "We do have a Masada complex. We have a pogrom complex. We have a Hitler complex." Stepping back from this confrontation, Alter traced the development of the Israelis' image of the mountain fortress in the Judean desert where the last stand of the Jewish rebellion against the Roman legions took place in 73 C.E.—a rebellion which ended in suicide rather than submission.

Pondering the large role played in the development of Israel's image of Masada by a single Hebrew poem written in 1927, Alter expressed unease with the link between literary and political images in Israel. Thus, Golda Meir, in connecting Holocaust, pogroms, and Israel's state of siege in the summer of 1973, might, Alter feared, have had her political thinking muddled by poetry—to the point where she failed to see that Israel was so much the dominant, virtually omnipotent, power in the region that it could very easily "afford to negotiate out of a position of strength." In particular, Alter urged "greater flexibility and more readiness for diplomatic risk-taking than the Israelis have so far evinced."

Three months after Alter proposed that Israel jettison its "Ma-

sada" myth, the Arabs, who showed no evidence of dispensing with *their* myths, launched the Yom Kippur War and very nearly overran the state. The correspondence on Alter's "Masada Complex" in the October COMMENTARY must have reached the hands of readers as 1,400 Syrian tanks were racing down the Golan Heights (to be met by a total of 180 tanks of the omnipotent Israelis) and 80,000 Egyptian troops were besieging 500 Israeli defenders along the Suez Canal.

ALTER now seems to think that Ruth Wisse's mode of coming to Israel's defense is almost as great a danger to the state as he once thought Golda Meir's siege mentality to be. He accuses Wisse, too, of lacking a sense of history when she sees the Arabs as continuators of the Nazis, and he takes special umbrage at her statement that

The Arab charge that the creation of Israel is a crime against an Arab people has much in common with the earlier Christian charge that Jews denied the Son of God, or that of the Nazis that Jews polluted the Aryan race.

Although Alter readily grants that the Arabs have constantly "used" anti-Semitic ideas in their propaganda, he insists that their hostility to the Jews is not "rooted" in anti-Semitism because that hostility depends not on fantasies but "on observed behavior of the Jews," i.e., the modern Jewish settlement of Palestine.

But surely, one might argue, the anti-Semitism of European Christendom also began with "observed behavior of the Jews" before it evolved into something more pathological. For as Alter himself wrote in an article published in 1991:

The Jews *did* emphatically reject the divinity of Jesus, the truth of the Gospels, and the authority of the Church, just as they were denounced for doing in anti-Judaic exhortation.

The fully developed tree is not reducible to its root. And even if one believed Alter's astonishing statement that "The Israeli-Arab conflict is a conflict of two peoples

over one land," one might ask what has *compelled* the Arabs to transform a "normal" political conflict into an anti-Semitic crusade, forced them to collaborate with Hitler in the 1940's and with neo-Nazi organizations in the 1990's, forced them to disseminate *The Protocols of the Elders of the Zion*?

Alter's charge that Wisse has a "frozen view of history" (because she sees anti-Zionism as continuous with anti-Semitism) invites the strenuous denial which she has made in her response to his attack.* The charge also invites a *tu quoque*. Thus, Alter indicates, quite rightly, that the designers of Israel's military strategy and many of the state's political leaders were themselves "liberal" in the broad sense of the term. But his fierce defense of contemporary Israeli liberals and leftists takes no account of how that tradition has changed since the 1977 election, when the Labor party lost control of what it had come to consider its ownership of government to people it viewed as cultural inferiors.

During its fifteen years in opposition, the Israeli Left built up a terrific energy of resentment against the state, against religious Jews, even in some quarters against Zionism itself. The Dayan of Israeli politics is no longer Moshe but his daughter Yael, the novelist and Knesset member who runs to meet with Yasir Arafat in order to signal her support of sanctions against her own country. The Benvenisti of Israeli culture is no longer David, the proud historian of the land, but his son, the sociologist Meron, who travels the world to tell audiences that Israel is "the master-race democracy." The Abba Eban who in 1980 could mockingly congratulate George Ball, former Under Secretary of State, for managing to last six minutes "without

* See the *New Republic*, April 19, 1993, for Wisse's lengthy reply to Alter and his shorter, but again acrimonious, response. She says there that "I differ from [Alter] in not entertaining a frozen view of history, in wanting, rather, to change its course. . . . I think that liberals should break with their past, and express their faith in the potential transformation of Arab society by insisting that the Arabs turn their attention away from the Jews toward their own self-improvement."

blaming Israel for whatever he was talking about" would in 1990 feel no qualms about accepting an appointment as George Ball Lecturer at Princeton University.

It is with some trepidation that I venture any criticism of Israeli intellectuals, since one of Alter's most bitterly stated objections to Wisse concerns her criticisms of such Israelis of the Left,

including many who have stalwartly served in three or more wars and have seen friends and comrades perish in combat.

Yet how far, one wonders, is Alter willing to go in extending an exemption from moral responsibility on grounds of military service? Should it be granted to Matti Peled, a retired major general who is a long-time favorite on the pro-PLO lecture circuit? Is Alter certain that Ilan Halevi, designated by the PLO as its Israeli representative to the Socialist International, or the professor at Haifa who has made a career out of declaring that "Zionism's original sin" can only be expunged by Israel's extinction, or the Israelis who sign *New York Times* ads calling for "dismantling the state" as an act of "minimum justice," have not done *their* military service? It is one of the great achievements of Zionism that the kind of Jew who in this country would end up as a conscientious objector in the American Friends Service Committee will in Israel serve in the army. But that should not make us forget that battlefield courage is only one kind of courage.

Of no group of liberal-Left Israelis is Alter more defensive than certain writers, especially Amos Oz, A.B. Yehoshua, and David Grossman. In her chapter on "The Ugly Israeli," Wisse contends that anti-Zionism now affects Israeli attitudes toward Israel in precisely the way anti-Semitism once affected Jewish attitudes toward Jewishness:

Despite the transforming presence of a Jewish country, intellectuals and writers in Israel today, like their Diaspora counterparts of the 1930's, try to separate their own "progressive" de-

sire for an independent homeland from the "reactionary" desires of their fellow Jews, in order to escape the Arab politics of hatred.

She analyzes two stories, S. Yizhar's "The Prisoner" (1948) and A.B. Yehoshua's "Facing the Forests" (1963), to illustrate her argument that what admitted Israeli literature into the liberal cultural mainstream of the West was its tendency to judge Jewish behavior by the severest standards without taking account of omnipresent Arab hostility.

Of the first story (about mistreatment of an Arab prisoner by Israeli soldiers), Wisse stipulates explicitly: "I don't mean to suggest, not even slightly, that [admittance into liberal Western culture] was Yizhar's consideration in writing." Nevertheless, Alter does not so much confute her analysis of the stories as upbraid her for questioning the motives of their authors. He shows no interest in her suggestion that readers of Yehoshua's tale (about an Arab who, with Jewish help, burns a Jewish National Fund forest to the ground) might have included the Arabs who, showing that life can imitate art, burned down the Carmel forest in 1989—but he himself presents Irgun forces as virtually armed with the verses of the rightist poet Uri Zvi Greenberg when they attacked Arabs in the village of Deir Yassin in 1948.

The chemistry of human motivation is subtle, especially if we allow for the distinction between conscious and unconscious motives. But numerous Israelis of the type for whom Alter speaks have been perfectly open about their consuming interest in being read, accepted, and influential abroad. Avishai Margalit, a professor of philosophy at the Hebrew University and an ideologue of Peace Now, stated some years ago that "an article in the *New York Times* is much more influential than the same article published [in Israel]." More recently, left-wing Israeli apologists for the scandalous decision to award the Israel Prize to Professor Yeshayahu Leibowitz (intrepid purveyor of the Israeli-Nazi equation) justified the action as "a

special way of telling the whole world that we are one of the most . . . democratic societies."

BUT something much more serious than the pursuit of fame or fortune and the gratification of vanity is involved in the appeal of Israeli writers to liberals abroad. Alter says, correctly, that Zionist pioneers wanted to "tak[e] control of their own destiny under the conditions of national autonomy enjoyed by other peoples." Yet in February 1988 (as Wisse points out), some of his own favorite Zionist exemplars—Oz, Yehoshua, the poet Yehuda Amichai, and the journalist Amos Elon—published a strident manifesto in the *New York Times* demanding that "all friends of Israel in the United States . . . speak up" against Israeli policy in the occupied territories.

According to Alter, these writers worked in the last election campaign for the "moderate-Left Meretz party," which is now part of the Rabin government; presumably they approve of the actions of one Meretz minister last October who hailed James Baker's "Fuck the Jews" eruption as "a legitimate expression," and another who declared, after the Bush-Baker downfall, that

Baker was good for Israel because he pressured us to make concessions. . . . Without massive U.S. intervention we will be stuck.

The desire to escape the consequences of national self-determination by inviting foreign intervention may be consonant with "moderate" leftism, but can it really be called Zionism?

Dan Vittorio Segre, an Israeli writer and specialist on Zionism, does not share Ruth Wisse's view that anti-Zionism is an extension, refinement, and dramatization of anti-Semitism. But he does say that anti-Zionism has a powerful, neurotic logic of its own,

a logic that has inspired a worldwide campaign of hate against four million Jews who have created a state on a territory smaller than the island of Sicily.

If Segre is right, then it seems irresponsible, if not worse, to dispar-

age Wisse's engaged, passionate attempt to get at least Jews to resist anti-Zionism.

As it happens, nobody has described the danger of a self-criticism that is not tempered with self-respect and political honesty better than one of the writers Alter defends, the novelist A.B. Yehoshua:

When I saw the depths of crazy self-hatred to which some of my leftist friends had sunk, I started thinking. I decided that I would

judge Israelis by the same standards as I judge the rest of the world—not by absolute standards. . . . I'm afraid of this self-hatred, because I know that it can be exploited. When Englishmen or Frenchmen hate themselves—and some do—it doesn't put their countries at risk. They're in their countries unconditionally. Whereas here, self-hatred is always connected to something else. . . .

Unfortunately, Yehoshua himself, who uttered those words in

1987, has notably failed to live up to the ideal he enunciated then. But that hardly detracts from its desirability. To the contrary, it testifies to the extremity of a predicament in which many Jews find themselves today and to which, it grieves me to say, my old friend and intellectual guide Robert Alter has now contributed his mite. But to this same agonizing predicament, Ruth Wisse, for one, has responded with unmatched clarity and courage.

Observations

Movies and Middle-Class Rage

Terry Teachout

IT is well known, yet oddly easy to overlook, that the most popular radio show in America today is a daily tirade by a Midwestern Wasp whose political views are for the most part indistinguishable from those of Ronald Reagan.

Rush Limbaugh is a loud, aggressive comedian-commentator whose nationally syndicated, three-hour-long call-in program is devoted to high-voltage attacks on liberals, environmentalists, advocates of political correctness, the Clinton administration, and, to borrow Limbaugh's own Walter Winchellesque coinage, "feminazis." Thanks to this program, Limbaugh has become a universally recognized symbol of everything the Left loves to hate. Says the liberal television commentator Linda Ellerbee: "I want to punch

out the radio. . . . Here's one more guy who doesn't get it."

But perhaps it is Ellerbee who "doesn't get it." Limbaugh is heard by 13 million people weekly over 526 radio stations; his new nightly half-hour TV show airs on 194 stations; and his book, *The Way Things Ought to Be*, first turned up on the *New York Times* best-seller list in the fall of 1992, and is still there.

Interestingly, some liberals do not share the common liberal view of Rush Limbaugh. William Raspberry, after publishing a column in the *Washington Post* accusing Limbaugh of "demagoguery" and "tossing the raw meat of bigotry to people who need desperately to feel superior to *somebody*," later confessed that he had not listened to the show closely. After doing so, he concluded that Limbaugh was not a bigot, and apologized. But Raspberry's original column was right about one thing: Limbaugh's

audience does consist of people who feel they are being ignored, and are angry about it.

Virtually no one in the major media speaks for those disaffected middle-class whites who, though making up a majority, see themselves as increasingly marginalized in a nation where "protected" minorities have become a privileged class and traditional values are under officially sanctioned (not to mention subsidized) siege. Rarely if ever is it suggested that their rage has any legitimacy, however partial or problematic, or that they could possibly be anything other than Archie Bunker-type racists. A typical example is *Newsweek's* March 29 cover story, "White Male Paranoia: Are They the Newest Victims—or Just Bad Sports?," whose superficial, dismissive tone is accurately conveyed by its flippant title. Outside the op-ed pages, the only important exceptions to the rule are the conservative talk-radio

TERRY TEACHOUT is writing *H.L. Mencken: A Life* and editing *A Second Mencken Chrestomathy*.

shows, of which Limbaugh's is the best-known.

Few opinion polls have sought to measure white middle-class rage in any sustained or sophisticated way, though responses to occasional carefully-worded questions invariably make the pollsters jump. (Between seven and eight out of every ten Americans, for example, are opposed to quota-based affirmative action.) Among politicians, few post-Reagan Republicans have tapped these sentiments effectively.

One Democrat, however—Bill Clinton—used them to neutralize middle-class support for George Bush in the 1992 presidential campaign. Back in 1988, the pollster Stanley Greenberg had discovered in opinion research commissioned—and later suppressed—by the Democratic National Committee that most “Reagan Democrats” were white middle-class voters who were deeply alienated from the Democratic party because of its positions on such issues as welfare, crime, and affirmative action. Acting on Greenberg's advice, Clinton tailored his campaign statements in such a way as to imply that he was a “new Democrat” prepared to break with the party on these issues. What those Reagan Democrats who voted for Clinton now think of his abject submission to the quota police is not yet known.

In any event, it is necessary to look beyond traditional methods of measuring public opinion in order to get a better sense of what middle-class white Americans are thinking. Rush Limbaugh's remarkable popularity, which shows no signs of fading, obviously says something about the extent of middle-class rage. So does the equally remarkable success of the movie *Falling Down*, Michael Douglas's latest starring vehicle. Released in March to mixed reviews, many of them hostile in the extreme, it immediately became the biggest hit movie in America, earning an estimated \$8.5 million in its first weekend of release.

THE “hero” of *Falling Down*, D-Fens (the nickname comes from his vanity license plates), is a California missile designer who has

lost his job as a result of defense-industry downsizing. He cannot understand why a man who has spent his entire adult life building ICBM's to protect America from Communism should now find himself out of work. More significantly, however, D-Fens hates Los Angeles, which he sees not as a gorgeous mosaic of diversity but as a squalid hellhole in which people of color are permitted casually to break the middle-class rules by which he has always lived. (He never says this explicitly, but the impression left by what he does say, as well as by his actions, is unambiguous.)

One hot summer morning, D-Fens finds himself caught in a traffic jam. His air conditioner fails. Suddenly, his mind snaps. He abandons his car and starts trudging through the *barrio* toward a rendezvous with death, conveniently acquiring along the way a small arsenal of hand-held artillery which he uses at regular intervals throughout the movie.

As played by Douglas, D-Fens is the ultimate nerd, fully equipped with the customary stigmata of his caste: brush haircut, horn-rimmed glasses, plastic pocket protector. His nemesis, played by Robert Duvall, is another walking cliché: a middle-aged police detective who realizes midway through his last day on the job (he is taking early retirement) that a madman is on the loose and must be stopped. Like D-Fens, Detective Prendergast is a white man trapped in a world he does not fully understand; unlike D-Fens, he stolidly accepts his lot, a few minor outbursts of low-grade insensitivity notwithstanding. Indeed, his closest friend on the squad is a handsome young Latino woman who is also, needless to say, a militant feminist.

Preposterous as all this sounds, it is very much in the tradition of earlier Hollywood movies about middle-class rage. Clint Eastwood's *Dirty Harry* and Charles Bronson's *Death Wish* were highly successful revenge fantasies (both of which spawned numerous sequels) about aging white men who become vigilantes out of disgust at the decadence of urban America. Going a shrewd step further, Ebbe Roe

Smith's screenplay makes D-Fens a member of what the columnist Ken Auletta has called “the new lumpenproletariat: laid-off white-collar workers.” (A week before *Falling Down* opened, *Fortune* devoted its cover story to white-collar unemployment.)

Joel Schumacher, the director of *Falling Down*, claims that D-Fens is a hapless victim of the Reagan era; the producer, Arnold Kopelson, says that *Falling Down* “capture[s] the 1980's and 90's through the soul of a common man who was up against it.” But more to the point is the fact that this particular common man's rage is in part racially motivated. Such emotions are rarely, if ever, expressed in the movies by ordinary middle-class white men; they are normally reserved for beer-guzzling rednecks and blue-collar psychotics. So it is all the more disappointing, if predictable, that *Falling Down* fails to follow through on the premise that seems originally to have inspired it.

D-FENS's first stop is a Korean-owned grocery store, where the proprietor treats him rudely. (In the wake of the Los Angeles riots, which *Falling Down* is plainly intended to evoke, one can hardly blame the storekeeper.) He smashes up the store and steals a baseball bat, which he later uses on a pair of thuggish Latino gang members who try to shake him down. Their reprisal takes the form of a callous drive-by shooting in which a half-dozen innocent people are hit—but not D-Fens, who miraculously turns the tables on the hapless thugs, takes a gym bag full of guns from them, and continues his odyssey through a neighborhood packed with homeless beggars, burned-out buildings, gang graffiti, and poor people with accents, all of which he views with tight-lipped contempt.

Not surprisingly, this is where the movie starts to go soft. *Falling Down* would have been more believable had it given D-Fens—or, for that matter, Detective Prendergast—a specifically racial grievance. But no black ever does anything bad to D-Fens, and D-Fens never does anything bad to a black.

The word "nigger" never crosses his lips, nor does any other ethnic slur. Indeed, such language is heard from only one character in *Falling Down*, the neo-Nazi owner of an army-surplus store who leerily assures D-Fens that he is "just like me." Two hot buttons are pounded with a sledgehammer in this scene: the storeowner crudely harasses two "faggots," then reveals with undisguised glee that his most treasured souvenir of World War II is an empty Zyklon-B canister which was once used to kill "kikes." Appalled, D-Fens butchers the man, borrows a portable rocket launcher, and goes his merry way.

The Manhattan theater where I saw *Falling Down* was packed, mostly with young white men. Up to this point in the movie, their laughter at D-Fens's earlier exploits (*Falling Down*, like *Dirty Harry*, is quite funny in spots) had been perceptibly forced; thereafter, it was easy. It is plain enough why. The killing of the neo-Nazi—the only person D-Fens actually murders—makes it clear that although D-Fens is a lunatic, he is not a *bigoted* lunatic. His subsequent exploits make the point even clearer: he tortures a rich, arrogant golfer at a posh country club and blows up a highway construction site with his rocket launcher, both times proving himself an equal-opportunity vigilante whose heart is in the right place (that is, against capitalism and development).

And D-Fens has no further racial confrontations. Instead, the

movie ends with a showdown between D-Fens and Prendergast, two white men who do not much like the new America. The one who had tried to change it, dies; the one who stoically accepts it, lives.

AS EXERCISES in deviationism go, then, *Falling Down* is pretty mild. But this did not rescue it from the frothings of the media's PC monitors. Although a few influential critics praised *Falling Down*—Vincent Canby of the *New York Times* described it as "a wickedly mischievous, entertaining suspense thriller," and Roger Ebert of the *Chicago Sun-Times* gave it three stars, dismissing in advance possible accusations that the movie might be "racist"—most reviewers were horrified by it, and said so. *Time*'s Richard Schickel called it "a dangerous and morally stupid movie"; *Newsweek*'s David Ansen attacked it as "opportunistic" and "pernicious"; *New York*'s David Denby dismissed it as "roistering blather."

Most revealing of all was a Sunday *New York Times* "think piece" by Caryn James, who clearly regarded it as her duty to counteract her colleague Vincent Canby's regrettable lapse from orthodoxy. *Falling Down*, she wrote, may be

the last big Bush-era movie, custom-made for the rabidly conservative Rush Limbaugh crowd that sees social blight as proof that America is lost in a liberal wilderness. . . . [D-Fens] expresses what a segment of the audience might guiltily think

but wouldn't dare say. . . . The character's response to crime and unemployment implies: "Don't blame me. I'm the victim." There is an audience for this opinion, which is the attitude Rush Limbaugh promotes. . . . Even Charles Bronson's exploitative *Death Wish* movies are more honest. That series may be vile in its admiration for the vigilante Mr. Bronson plays, but at least it has the courage of its vileness.

Yet if *Falling Down* were actually the movie Caryn James describes, it would have been a much better and more significant piece of work. Instead, it pulls its punches, especially when they are hard rights.

On the other hand, *Falling Down* does tiptoe, however ineptly, to the brink of saying something honest about the state of race relations in America today. This is undoubtedly one of the reasons that Americans are flocking to see it, and it is also why the mass media are treating its popularity as a social phenomenon of some importance, albeit one to be viewed with contempt. (The face of Michael Douglas as D-Fens stares angrily out from the cover of *Newsweek*'s "white-male-paranoia" issue.) Whether *Falling Down*'s commercial success—coming on top of the Rush Limbaugh phenomenon—means that we can now look forward to a film that will deal really honestly with middle-class rage and contemporary urban life is an intriguing question that remains to be answered.

Where the Hope Is

UPON THIS ROCK: THE MIRACLES OF A BLACK CHURCH. By SAMUEL G. FREEDMAN. HarperCollins. 373 pp. \$22.50.

Reviewed by GLENN C. LOURY

THE Manhattan Institute, a conservative public-policy organization with a particular focus on issues affecting New York City, has since 1987 sponsored an annual lecture named in honor of the financier Walter Wriston. A black-tie affair attracting leaders from the worlds of politics, business, academia, and the arts, the Wriston Lecture has become a noteworthy event in the city's cultural life. In recent years the Institute has offered its podium to the likes of Tom Wolfe, Milton Friedman, V.S. Naipaul, and Rupert Murdoch. But the 1992 Wriston Lecturer was a comparatively unknown figure—the Reverend Johnny Ray Youngblood, pastor of St. Paul Community Baptist Church in the East New York section of Brooklyn.

Reverend Youngblood's ministry among the predominantly black residents of a troubled New York City neighborhood is the subject of Samuel Freedman's new book, an account of a year spent observing closely the various undertakings of the church and its pastor. Freedman provides a sympathetic and occasionally quite moving portrait of the moral and cultural universe created and sustained by black American Christians in the midst of the maelstrom that contemporary inner-city life has become. His book should be read, not so much for its prose, which is adequate to the task though seldom more than that,

but rather for the window Freedman opens onto a world little known to outsiders.

Upon This Rock takes the reader on an unforgettable journey into the heart of black civil society—a society which, from the time of slavery, has been dominated by the black church. It reveals the depth and power of the personal commitments held by a legion of believers from every social background, to their God of course, but also to their fellow human beings of all races. In so doing, it makes clear why it is possible to hope that revival, physical and spiritual, may yet come to our blighted urban communities.

"Where the Hope Is" was, in fact, the title of Reverend Youngblood's Wriston Lecture, presented just days after the 1992 election. The ironies, and the dangers, of the juxtaposition created by his invitation from the Manhattan Institute were clearly not lost on the speaker. Here was a black Baptist minister, a product of a New Orleans ghetto, a child of fundamentalist church upbringing, a man with a political sensibility forged by the biblical example of prophetic denunciations of injustice, an African-American keen to affirm the dignity and integrity of the black cultural heritage. He was standing before an establishment audience of elite power brokers, in a secular forum, speaking to representatives of "the system" at the behest of a conservative organization, just days after the election (for the first time in nearly a generation) of a Democratic President who would come into office with a mandate to address the central domestic ills of our society. What forces had conspired to bring about such an event? How could the speaker be true to his deepest convictions, political, racial, and spiritual, while making constructive use of the occasion?

The ironies of the event extended beyond the personal. If Rever-

end Youngblood had never imagined he would one day be speaking before such an audience, it is also likely that, until quite recently, many in the audience would not have been particularly interested in hearing from him. Similarly, ten years ago an account like Freedman's would in all probability have been limited to a readership with a special interest in the sociology and theology of black religious life. But the profoundly threatening problems of urban social decay, together with the apparent failure of various programmatic efforts to fix what ails our cities, have forced those who lack an unshakable faith in the power of government to look in unusual places for hope.

For blacks, too, the cultural politics of the 90's has made, or should make, strange bedfellows. As the political analyst Michael Barone has recently noted, whereas feminists set the dominant tone at the Democratic convention last year, the sentiments of religious traditionalists prevailed at the Republican gathering. In view of the indisputable cultural fact that vast numbers of black Americans believe that the Bible is the inerrant word of God, and that Jesus of Nazareth was crucified, buried, and then literally raised from the dead so that we sinners might have eternal life, a reflexive support by spiritual leaders like Reverend Youngblood for the liberal political agenda has become increasingly difficult to justify.

The resulting tension between cultural politics on the one hand and the desperate need to find mechanisms of revival in the black ghettos on the other has created consternation among some early reviewers of *Upon This Rock*. For many liberals, blacks in their victimized state have been archetypal emblems of the need for a more "progressive" politics in American public life. But what is a good liberal to do if these very same victims, when acting as subjects of

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their own renewal rather than as objects of state-sanctioned relief, create institutions which embody culturally conservative principles, like the legitimacy of male governance of the church, or the righteousness of the age-old sanction against homosexuality?

WHEN the principal expression of black religiosity reaching the public forum was the social gospel of Martin Luther King, Jr., liberals could take comfort in the authority being thus lent to the forward march of political reform. But when blacks, faced with the implications of astronomical out-of-wedlock birth rates and the virtual disappearance of male figures from positions of authority in the home, reject feminism for a more traditional perspective, then some liberals seem to feel it a duty to decry that people of good intentions should have stumbled upon such reactionary means to address their problems.

Thus, the writer Anthony Heilbut panned Freedman's book in the *New York Times Book Review*, seeing Reverend Youngblood's concern with the standing of men in his community as a disturbing "obsession." Heilbut belittled the pastor's opposition to abortion, found his sexual politics "disquieting," and claimed that his efforts to salvage black fathers was taking place "at the expense of their wives and gay sons." Similarly, the generally favorable reviewer of Freedman's book in the *Washington Post Book World* worried that he was insufficiently critical of male dominance among the governing councils of St. Paul Community Baptist Church.

The point is not that Youngblood, or Freedman, is above criticism. But against the backdrop of what is being accomplished at St. Paul's, the concerns of these reviewers seem bizarre. The black male as an "endangered species" is a perennial topic these days at liberal conference gatherings; how then can one reject as sexist a ministry which is successfully resurrecting precisely this endangered species? I have yet to hear the wives and children of these reclaimed husbands and fathers complain

that the methods employed by Youngblood and other Christian practitioners engaged in similar efforts around the country are offensive to *them*. At the very least, apostles of "tolerance" owe inner-city black congregations respect, not derision, for the autonomous cultural choices they make.

Nor, it should be stipulated, does Youngblood's position in this area make him a political conservative: no one attending his Manhattan Institute appearance last November, or reading Freedman's book, could be confused on that point. Youngblood is an agitator; he uses the first-person plural when talking of people at the bottom of society, savagely defending their dignity, their right to the presumption of equal humanity, from the predations of elitists of all political persuasions. In his sermons, some quite eloquently and artfully captured by Freedman's eyewitness account, he offers sharp criticisms of conservative political neglect. At the same time, he stuns a group of white seminarians with an unapologetic indictment of their abstract, philosophical stance of solidarity with the poor when there are so many opportunities to serve these same poor which are going unexploited.

But Youngblood also recognizes that respect for inner-city blacks will not come about as a result of legislative initiatives, or increased program budgets. To a former drug addict, habitual felon, or prostitute, politics cannot bring the sense of fulfillment and personal worth which is to be had through the hard and dedicated work of redemption and reconstruction. "Why do we rebuild?" he rhetorically asked his audience last fall. His answer: "We rebuild 'that we no more be a reproach.' We rebuild for our own dignity."

The deepest scars of the victims of racism and oppression are worn, Youngblood understands, on the inside; the problems of their lives are often as much the manifestations of a spiritual vacancy as the evidence of a societal failing. He recognizes that to say this out loud is to risk being misunderstood by whites looking for an excuse to be

rid of their social responsibilities. At the same time, he sees a Faustian bargain in the seductive temptation to remain silent.

AS FREEDMAN paints him, Youngblood is a model of spiritual and moral leadership. Perhaps this is why some observers find it so hard to accept the message which flows out of his success, and that of his congregants. For the ultimate irony is that this success, achieved by deeply convinced believers in the face of the worst devastation our society seems capable of producing, may just point the way toward a recovery not only of the ghettos but of the country.

Teen pregnancy has risen astronomically among whites as well as blacks. The ravages of drugs know no racial or sociological barriers. The problems of our schools, and our seeming inability to meet effectively the challenges of foreign economic competition, are warning signs that all is not well with the American soul. Could it be that, in defiance of the dictates of political correctness and post-modern relativism, the struggle for survival and dignity among America's traditional outcasts might yet point the way toward an ecumenical, multicultural salvation?

Such, at any rate, is the possibility suggested by a reading of *Upon This Rock*.

Up to the Minute

BARTLETT'S FAMILIAR QUOTATIONS: SIXTEENTH EDITION. By JOHN BARTLETT. JUSTIN KAPLAN, General Editor. Little, Brown. 1,405 pp. \$40.00.

Reviewed by ROBIN ROGER

THE back cover of this, the sixteenth edition of *Bartlett's*, features ten quotations selected from the more than 20,000 found inside. That Gloria Steinem, Steve Biko, Grace Slick, and *Star Trek* fans are the sources of four of them indicates what Justin Kaplan, the well-known biographer of Mark

ROBIN ROGER has contributed fiction and essays to several Canadian publications.

Twain, has tried to do here: turn *Bartlett's* into a celebration of the adversary culture and the electronic media.

Kaplan's main task as editor was to choose new quotations and delete old ones from the fifteenth edition, published in 1980. In the course of adding his 1,600 new gems, he promoted 340 previously unquoted authors to immortality and consigned 245 to oblivion. Many of the new quotations are by contemporary voices, and many of these read like the liberal Left's Hall of Fame.

Feminism is ascendant, from Susan Brownmiller ("Man's discovery that his genitalia could serve as a weapon to generate fear must rank as one of the most important discoveries of prehistoric times, along with the use of fire and the first crude stone axe") to Germaine Greer ("Is it too much to ask that women be spared the daily struggle for superhuman beauty in order to offer it to the caresses of a subhumanly ugly mate?"). No less salient is anti-Americanism, from Philip Caputo ("You're going to learn that one of the most brutal things in the world is your average nineteen-year-old American boy") to Toni Morrison ("At no point in my life have I ever felt as though I were American").

KAPLAN might argue that his choices simply reflect the temper of the times. But a major criterion for inclusion in *Bartlett's Familiar Quotations* is, as it has been since the first edition in 1855, familiarity. So where is a familiar figure like William F. Buckley, Jr., who has presumably produced a witty saying or two in the course of a long career? Or Allan Bloom, whose *The Closing of the American Mind* included such catchy comments as "Rock music is the . . . junk food of the soul"? Evidently Kaplan is ignorant of many well-known people and their no less well-known words, or his sense of the familiar is peculiarly selective.

Even when compelled to include a conservative, Kaplan manages to cast a shadow of disapproval. As Adam Meyerson of *Policy Review* has pointed out, "the new *Bartlett's* contains just three

quotations from Ronald Reagan"—surely one of the most quotable of American Presidents—"the same number as from Zachary Taylor and Gerald Ford, Presidents hardly remembered for their eloquence." And to add insult to injury, rather than including Reagan's prescient attacks on the Soviet system (except in a footnote to the movie *Star Wars*), or his stirring words on the role of government in America, Kaplan highlights a sentence that casts Reagan in the light of Marie Antoinette ("It's difficult to believe that people are starving in this country because food isn't available"). Asked by the *Wall Street Journal* to explain himself, Kaplan replied that Reagan's other sayings were not memorable (*sic*) and, furthermore, were mostly derived from the movies—this, from an editor who states in his preface that the movies "continue to be a rich quotation source."

IF HE leaves little space for conservatives, Kaplan leaves plenty of

room for entertainers and other celebrities of the popular culture. "In order to be descriptive," he writes, "to reflect the way we talk and think, a book called *Familiar Quotations*, edited and published for the 1990's, has to look beyond as well as to traditional sources." What we find "beyond" traditional sources is, basically, newspapers, magazines, television shows, movies, rock-and-roll. Since these, too, tend to be Left-leaning, Kaplan's bias and his "method" work hand in glove.

Quotations from the electronic media present a special problem: they tend to lose whatever power they might once have possessed when transferred to the printed page. (Item: "People, people who need people/Are the luckiest people in the world. . .") And the electronic media—the daily press, too, for that matter—are hardly repositories of our most cogent, complex, or worthwhile observations. "Me want a cookie," from *Sesame Street*; "We are the world/We are

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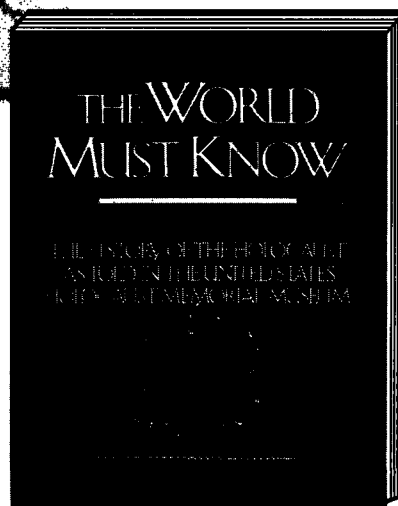
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the children . . .," by Michael Jackson and Lionel Richie; the lyrics of "Light My Fire"; a line from the movie *E.T.*; a caption from the comic strip *Zippy the Pinhead*: such are Kaplan's discoveries. Familiar they may be, but one wonders if Kaplan seriously believes they also meet some of the other criteria he sets for inclusion: "literary power, intellectual and historical significance, originality, and timeliness."

It could be said that it was the erudite John Bartlett himself who in the mid-19th century set *Bartlett's* on the course which has led to Kaplan. By ripping well-known passages from their original contexts and compiling them in a collection of fragments, Bartlett was at the forefront of a long, steady trend of transforming knowledge into data, mere random bits of floating information. And Bartlett compounded the sin by organizing his phrases chronologically according to the date of the author's birth rather than thematically. (He at-

tempted to compensate by adding a thematic index almost the same length as the quotations themselves.)

Without context, even the most resonant quotations grow faint. And if this is true for quotations of great stature and familiarity, it is even more the case for obscure ones. "Colorless green ideas sleep furiously," taken from Noam Chomsky's *Syntactic Structures*, means practically nothing without context or explanation (a footnote in Kaplan's edition which attempts to supply the want merely exposes the problem). But John Bartlett's abandonment of context 138 years ago, however questionable, is as nothing compared with Justin Kaplan's pursuit of liberal sentiment and cultural trivia. Touted as "the most thorough revision in decades," the sixteenth edition gives us a *Bartlett's* in danger of revising itself into uselessness by transforming a once-indispensable collection of significant sayings into a repository of up-to-the-minute trash.

A Lost World

THURSDAY'S CHILD HAS FAR TO GO: A MEMOIR OF THE JOURNEYING YEARS. By WALTER LAQUEUR. Scribner's. 418 pp. \$30.00.

Reviewed by MARK FALCOFF

WALTER LAQUEUR is well-known to readers of COMMENTARY as one of the most talented and readable historians of our time. In addition to more than a dozen major works of scholarship on European, Russian, and Middle East politics, he has also tried his hand at a novel (*The Missing Years*) and now, in *Thursday's Child Has Far to Go*, autobiography.

Laqueur was born in Breslau in 1921 of not very well-to-do parents who formed part of a close-knit clan which had lived in eastern Germany for decades. His childhood was unexceptional until well after 1933—school, reading, hikes, youth groups. By 1936, however, it was becoming obvious that Jews had no future in Germany, and as conditions worsened young Laqueur found himself drawn into circles which pushed him toward emigration to Palestine, then under British Mandate. While en route across the Mediterranean to his new home, he heard via ship's radio a vague report of what he later learned was the roundup of some 30,000 German Jews for Buchenwald and other concentration camps. But for his timely departure, Laqueur might well have been one of them.

Instead, at age seventeen he found himself on a kibbutz where he learned conversational Hebrew and Arabic, farming and military skills, and met his future wife Naomi. He continued to receive letters and parcels from his parents, sometimes posted from Holland or Switzerland, until the middle of the war, when all communication ceased. (He later learned that in 1942 his parents were shipped off to camps in Poland and murdered shortly after their arrival.)

MARK FALCOFF is resident scholar at the American Enterprise Institute and a frequent contributor to COMMENTARY.



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After the war, Laqueur decided that kibbutz life was not for him and moved with his young wife to Jerusalem, where he found work in a bookstore. By now he had already begun to study Russian, and to speak and write English as well. Soon he made a fortuitous jump into journalism, becoming Jerusalem correspondent of the Hebrew-language newspaper *Hamishmar* and coming into personal contact with Chaim Weizmann, David Ben-Gurion, Judah Magnes, Moshe Sharett, and other founders of the Jewish state. He and his wife endured the siege of Jerusalem during Israel's war of independence—an event which he recounts here in vivid detail.

Just as he had tired of kibbutz life, after 1949 he became restless to expand his horizons. He began to visit Europe regularly in 1951, settling in Great Britain in 1955, with regular visits to France and West Germany. The rest of the story—his accession to the directorship of the Wiener Library in London, his many scholarly activities, and finally his move to Washington, where he is now academic director of the Center for Strategic and International Studies—he has chosen not to relate here, though he promises to do so in a future volume.

IF THIS recounting of the circumstances of Laqueur's early life seems flat and undramatic, especially given the events themselves, it does at least replicate the tone of his book, which, for all its richly-filigreed detail, is markedly unemotional and distant. Here are two examples of the matter-of-fact style in which he relates the most horrendous occurrences:

My uncle belonged to those German Jews of which there were not a few who firmly believed that nothing could happen to them because they were so deeply rooted in Germany. He had served in the army in World War I; furthermore, Jews had lived in [his home town] since 1285. One evening early in the war some strangers appeared at the door. They said that the apartment had been allocated to them and would he vacate it within the next half

hour. My uncle ran to the police, suffered a heart attack at the station, and died. His wife was removed that evening and deported to one of the camps, where she was murdered. Fortunately, their only daughter had left Germany a few weeks before the outbreak of the war.

* * *

What became of my classmates and the other [non-Jewish] friends of my boyhood? . . . The lucky ones survived seven years in the army; others returned from prison camps only in 1948 or 1950, or not at all. About a third, perhaps more, were killed in the war; of the survivors quite a few were wounded, some severely. Over the years I have heard from quite a few of them. . . . There was a striking uniformity to their fate: They truly felt victims of the war, having lost the best years of their lives, as well as their homes in East Germany, and in quite a few cases, their families. . . .

IT OCCURRED to me more than once in reading this book that Laqueur's reticence and emotional austerity might be a form of bereavement therapy. (He half-admits it himself.) But as the second of the two quotations suggests, there is something else, too—a more nuanced view of Germany, Germans, and recent German history than one might expect from one who had experienced such terrible injustice at German hands.

Partly this is due to Laqueur's firm conviction that most Germans would never have willed the crimes committed in their name, even if a fair number of them were all-too-willing accomplices. Partly, too, I think it springs from his own experience, which on a personal level was less traumatic than others'. In school well up to 1936 there were no anti-Semitic incidents, and many of his schoolmates let him know that they felt embarrassed at having to go through the mock-patriotic charades which were required of them. Such considerations seem to have acted as a counterbalance to the anger which Laqueur might otherwise be expected to harbor against the German people as a whole. As he puts it dryly,

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The loss of my native country at the age of seventeen hurt me considerably less than the loss of those I loved. . . . If my country did not want me, I was reasonably sure that I could find my place elsewhere.

Then, too, Laqueur's emotional remoteness from his former country may spring in part from the fact that, as far as he is concerned, it is a completely different place today. Indeed, the radical contrast between past and present is the principal subtheme of this book. German Jewry has, of course, all but ceased to exist, but so too has the Germany of the pre-Hitler period, with all its faults but with many of its virtues as well, particularly its rich and complex cultural life. In Israel, the kibbutz where Laqueur survived without electricity in 1939 now has fax machines; meanwhile, the idealism which inspired him and his contemporaries has necessarily given way to more pragmatic considerations. All this Laqueur takes in stride.

He is less able to deal serenely with the experience which forms the first chapter of the book—his first visit since the war to his hometown, now Wroclaw in Poland. The illustrations include a photo: a handsome street of solid five-story apartment houses, an architectural embodiment of German order, prosperity, and solid bourgeois virtues. Searching for the house on this street in which he grew up, Laqueur is confused by the street names (which have been changed), but that turns out not to be the main problem.

I had expected to see a house, or its ruins, or perhaps a new building, but there was nothing, not even a trace that human beings had lived and died there. . . . The area would have seemed, to visitors who had not known it before, very peaceful and utterly empty. The effect it had on me was different; nothingness can make a stronger impact than destruction and ruin.

Thursday's Child is by turns witty, ironic, and evocative, a monument to some of the events which have shaped (and misshaped) our era. Uniting Laqueur's skills as a historian and writer, it reminds us

of the degree to which he remains a messenger from a world we have lost.

In Praise of Enterprise

ADAM SMITH IN HIS TIME AND OURS: DESIGNING THE DECENT SOCIETY. By JERRY Z. MULLER. Free Press. 272 pp. \$22.95.

Reviewed by GEORGE RUSSELL

FOR Aristotle, politics was the highest sphere of human activity because it regulated and directed conduct toward the communal (as opposed to the individual) good:

For even if the good of the community coincides with that of the individual, the good of the community is clearly a greater and more perfect good both to get and to keep.

Commerce, on the other hand, was bad in Aristotle's eyes:

In the community that is most finely governed, the citizens shall not live a vulgar or a merchant's way of life, for this sort of life is ignoble and contrary to virtue.

Ever since Aristotle, Western society has been at war with itself about the value of commerce and, in the end, of economic liberty: so necessary (at least to those who, unlike Aristotle, do not live in a slave-owning society), and yet so base, so self-aggrandizing, so antithetical to the general welfare. Even in laissez-faire circles the notion of virtue in the pursuit of wealth is seen as something of an oxymoron: instead, the motto is, Harness Greed!

Thus we come to what is by now a familiar contradiction. Communism has been shattered and discredited, and the focus of much economic thinking on the Left has shifted away from the virtues of socialism (which turns out to be "imperfect," after all). Nevertheless, the free-market forces that helped lead to Communism's dissolution are still widely held to be not only deficient but conducive

to antisocial, even immoral, behavior.

All the more reason, then, to welcome this thoughtful and accessible book by Jerry Muller, who teaches history at Catholic University in Washington. Muller has taken the discussion of free enterprise's notorious principle of self-interest back to its roots in the Scottish Enlightenment, and has shown it to be a refutation of Aristotle: not only a necessity for the economic well-being of society, but also a necessary basis for social virtue. *Homo economicus* is not only successful, he is good.

In making his case, Muller returns to the primary source: the works of Adam Smith. The principal text is not *The Wealth of Nations* (published in 1776) but Smith's ethical treatise, *The Theory of Moral Sentiments* (written in 1751 and rewritten many times before Smith's death in 1790), and the reconstructed notes of Smith's unfinished work on politics and government, published as *Lectures on Jurisprudence*. There is much here to conjure with, since Smith—a classicist of note, professor (at age twenty-eight) of logic and rhetoric at the University of Glasgow, in his mature years commissioner of customs for Scotland—was first and foremost a moral philosopher, whose main intention, in his own words, was

to animate the public passions of men, and rouse them to seek out the means of promoting the happiness of the society.

The happy society, according to Smith, had a name: commercial society. In making that assertion, Smith revealed himself to be a revolutionary, the founder not merely of a scientific economic discipline but also of a social morality and an ethics. The good society, he contended, repudiating the idea of commercial activity propounded by landowning aristocracies and Christian teachers over the centuries, was one based on "universal opulence," by which he meant the well-being of all its members.

YET far from glorifying greed and private acquisition, Smith, as Muller reminds us, defined wealth in

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social terms. He saw the foundation of opulence in the social division of labor and in the principles of exchange which made that division possible. These gave people who had previously been chattels a new basis for affirming their human dignity. The man who "lives by exchanging, or becomes in some measure a merchant," was free. And Smith went a crucial step further: the same man was likely to be virtuous.

At bottom, Smith argued that man, "naturally sociable," was a victim of passions that could nevertheless be channeled into virtues—and not merely by the "invisible hand" of the market. That image, which has supplied perennial ammunition for anticapitalists, in fact appears only once in *The Wealth of Nations*. Smith's point was far more subtle: for "weak and imperfect" man to gain wealth in commercial society, he would be required to exercise "economy, industry, discretion, attention, the application of thought"—the opposites of antisocial vice and passion. In a word, the cardinal virtue of commercial society was self-command.

True, the basis of that self-control (as Smith saw it) was self-interestedness, or pride, the fundamental sin of medieval theology. But therein lay the fruitful paradox. Human egotism *modulated* by social interaction was, in Smith's view, the basis of morality. Rather than loving our neighbor as ourselves—egotism extended—we learn in commercial society to "love ourselves as we love our neighbor"—egotism restrained. To Smith, man's improved moral and ethical condition would be a function of the institutions in which he lived and worked.

As Muller argues repeatedly, the man who collected excise taxes for Scotland was no fanatical enemy of government or the state. (In Smith's formulation: "To say that government is expensive and the people not oppressed is to say that the people are rich.") He saw a clear role for government in national defense, the protection of life and property, public education—and in the breakup of monopoly, rent-seeking, and other

forms of noncompetitive self-aggrandizement. Above all, Smith saw the domestic role of the state as helping to ensure that no one—even when dispensing public goods—could avoid the market, the wellspring of social discipline and thus of virtue.

There is plenty here for modern policy wonks to consider, as the U.S. enters a new era of debate over the leading role of government versus free enterprise. Muller's contribution to that debate is to remind all sides that free enterprise has a purpose—and a good one.

After the Fall

THE PORCUPINE. By JULIAN BARNES.
Knopf. 138 pp. \$17.00.

Reviewed by ARCH PUDDINGTON

THE Communist experience, which over the decades exerted a powerful influence on the emotions of people throughout the world, utterly failed to stimulate the imagination of the West's creative writers. Aside from the two titans of anti-totalitarian literature, George Orwell and Arthur Koestler, plus a handful of lesser-known writers and practitioners of the spy genre, Western novelists and, for that matter, filmmakers, generally avoided the many themes suggested by the realities of life under Communism. To the contrary: in America, at least, the excesses of *anti-Communism* proved much more fertile terrain for the literary mind, giving birth to a cottage industry of books and movies equating anti-Communism with McCarthyism, portraying the CIA as fomenting bizarre plots against innocent Americans, and indicting cold-war armaments projects as a menace to the environment and the human species itself.

Now, with the publication of *The Porcupine* by the noted British writer Julian Barnes, we have the first serious Western novelistic attempt in some time to come to grips with the Communist experi-

ence. The story is set in a fictional East European country which closely resembles Bulgaria; the time is shortly after the Communist system has collapsed and been replaced by a market-oriented democracy; and the issue addressed by Barnes is highly relevant to all societies which have liberated themselves from the shackles of a Leninist regime: can a formerly Communist society punish those responsible for the crimes of the past without resorting to the fraud and deceit which marked Communist judicial methods?

Barnes is an unlikely candidate for an undertaking of this sort. In his previous novels, he has displayed little interest in the great political and social debates of our era, preferring more conventional and personal subjects: coming of age in the suburbs, sexual obsession, adultery, the tricks of fate. Indeed, Barnes seems to regard ideas as much less interesting than experiments in literary form and the intricacies of the English language.

It is thus not surprising that *The Porcupine* does not conform to the traditional pattern of the political novel. Its plot centers on the trial of the country's former Communist leader, a veteran party loyalist named Stoyo Petkanov who is clearly modeled on Todor Zhivkov, Bulgaria's leader during most of the Communist period. Like most Communist bosses, Zhivkov managed to shroud much of his political and private life in mystery. But Barnes has obviously familiarized himself with the available information, and the details of Petkanov's political career—such as his proposal to transform his country into a republic of the Soviet Union—usually mirror known facts.

One suspects that Barnes developed a fascination for the real-life Zhivkov because of the Bulgarian dictator's resourcefulness and staying power. He remained at the pinnacle of his party-state for 35 years, during which time he weathered leadership changes in Moscow and survived various challenges—reportedly including several coup attempts—from within Bulgaria itself. By instinct a dogmatist, Zhivkov could play at reform when the

ARCH PUDDINGTON, the author of *Failed Utopias*, works for *Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty* in New York.

temper of the times demanded it. He was, in other words, the consummate professional totalitarian.

But despite Zhivkov's wiliness, Bulgaria gained a certain pariah-state reputation during the final years of Communist rule; the regime, usually quite successful in avoiding negative publicity, earned notoriety for providing safe haven for terrorists, persecuting ethnic minorities, and commissioning the assassination of émigré journalists by means of poisoned umbrellas.

Although Zhivkov drew much of the blame for these crimes, he was not charged with the most serious offenses of the Communist era when the new government eventually placed him on trial. It prosecuted him instead under the laws which had prevailed during his leadership, a decision which meant that he would not be compelled to answer for such major political acts as the oppression of the country's Turkish minority. Zhivkov was tried for the traditional crimes of "bourgeois corruption": favoritism, nepotism, the misallocation of funds.

BARNES's fictional Stoyo Petkanov likewise faces corruption charges which seem insignificant given the many crimes committed by the state during his rule. Ordinarily, one might expect that pinning guilt on a man whose lengthy rule was sustained by a system of official repression, especially for such minor offenses, would prove simple enough. Yet from the very outset Petkanov proves an elusive target. Documentary evidence is in short supply, and witnesses, often the former beneficiaries of Petkanov's patronage, reinforce his alibis or suffer convenient memory loss.

As for Petkanov himself, he treats the charges—indeed, the whole process—with contempt. And he reserves his most withering scorn for the state prosecutor, Peter Solinsky. A law professor and the son of a one-time party comrade of Petkanov, Solinsky is a man of mediocre abilities and considerable self-doubt, a man trying to "force on himself a maturity which mere time was failing to provide." A party member for many years, Solinsky had decided, almost on a

whim, to turn in his party card and join a nascent Green party shortly before the collapse of the Communist system. He is someone, it is made clear, with little backbone and few strong convictions.

Of the two men, Petkanov is by far the more skilled debater, both in courtroom exchanges with the prosecutor and in their private interrogation sessions. Semi-educated, and still prone to misty sentimentality when recounting stories of the party's early ordeals, Petkanov is both more intellectually agile and more committed to a set of political principles than his non-Communist adversary, who summons up lame clichés in defending the new democratic order.

At a certain point in the trial, Petkanov scores a devastating blow by recounting how Solinsky, while still a loyal party member, had spent his time during a state-financed trip to Italy buying expensive clothes and bedding an attractive woman. After a bit of soul-

searching, Solinsky hits back by presenting a document supplied by the security apparatus—and almost certainly faked—that ties Petkanov to the death of his own daughter, a woman who had been a rising force in national affairs before her mysterious demise. Through this bit of fraud Solinsky clinches his victory; while Petkanov is convicted only of the corruption charges, in the public's mind he has been found guilty of a truly monstrous crime.

But while Solinsky may have fooled the nation, he has not deceived his wife, the granddaughter of a revolutionary hero and a victim of Stalin. As is usually the case in Barnes's novels, it is the woman who represents honesty and common sense. "It's a show trial," she tells Peter. "Just the modern version. A show trial. That's all." Nor has Solinsky fooled Petkanov. Defiant to the end, he hurls a terrifying imprecation at the prosecutor in their final meeting: "I convict you."

Is America on the Way Down?

In March 1992, *Commentary* published a debate between the noted political analyst Edward N. Luttwak and Robert L. Bartley, the Editor of the *Wall Street Journal*. Their topic: Is America in decline?

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In fact, at no time in *The Porcupine* is it directly suggested that Petkanov was responsible for criminal acts or political misconduct of any sort. A reader unfamiliar with postwar European history would be compelled to conclude that the country had been in more competent and honest hands under the old leader—who remains to the end a man of ideals—than under the new breed of democratic politicians represented by Peter Solinsky.

Such an impression is reinforced by Barnes's bleak depiction of life in the post-Communist era. Shortages are more severe than during Communist times; ration coupons for sausage are not available at all; buses run episodically because of fuel scarcity; and there are daily, planned power outages. The new ethos of capitalism, combined with endemic scarcity, has triggered an alarming deterioration in the level of everyday civility. To demonstrate contempt for the shape things are in, people have adopted the practice of spitting on the streets, and everywhere there is the lure of pornography, the black market, and imported alcohol. Images of death abound in this novel: there are more abortions than live births, and more deaths than births.

To reinforce this atmosphere of decay and hopelessness, Barnes suggests that the younger generation is, if anything, more lacking in values than those who had spent long years under Communism. Three university students who make intermittent appearances come across as silly and vacuous; they are unfavorably contrasted to an old grandmother who sits

mutely under a photograph of Lenin dreaming of

the moment when men and women would rise and shake themselves, recovering their dignity and starting again the whole glorious cycle of revolution.

NO WONDER, then, that against this background the aging Communist Petkanov seems in a perverse way a man of principle *par excellence*. And in this one respect, it must be said, Barnes's otherwise jejune portrait of Petkanov reflects a historical phenomenon that is very real. Thus, in the ghoulish tribunal held before his summary execution, Nicolai Ceausescu of Romania treated his interrogators with contempt and brazenly defended the policies which had made Romania the outcast of Europe.

Then there is Erich Honecker, the leader of Communist East Germany. Placed on trial for having given border guards shoot-to-kill orders at the Berlin Wall, Honecker called the building of the Wall a "historic event" which "was correct and remains correct," and added that it had contributed to peace and European unity. Therefore, he concluded, he and his fellow party leaders were "not guilty of any political, judicial, or moral wrongdoing."

Not only are there Communists who continue to defend the most despicable policies, but there are those in the West who find much to praise in their supposedly undiminished idealism. This is certainly true of Irene Disch, an American now living in Germany, who describes Honecker in near-heroic terms in a piece which appeared in the "Talk of the Town"

section of the *New Yorker*. Noting his "stern intensity" and erect posture, the latter a "symbol of incorruptibility," Disch is struck that Honecker's "enthusiasm for the working class and for Communism is still fresh, boyish," and marvels that, "Neither old age nor years of authority seem to have altered Honecker's ideals." (The *New Yorker* article created something of a scandal in Germany when it was learned that the author is married to one of Honecker's attorneys and had gained unusual access to closed judicial sessions.)

There is little doubt that we will encounter similar tributes to the founding fathers of Marxism-Leninism as the countries they ruined remain mired in economic disarray and political strife. The fascination of the Western intellectual class for men of lofty motives and iron determination—provided, that is, that they are men of the Left—is an old, old story.

Interestingly, however, the real-life Todor Zhivkov has adopted a far more realistic attitude toward the past than either Honecker or Barnes's fictional Petkanov. Thus, Zhivkov has derided as "utter nonsense" Erich Honecker's contention that Communism would rise again, and has stated that the Leninist conception of building socialism in backward societies had produced a "stillborn" socialism. *The Porcupine* would have been a far more credible work of political fiction had Barnes patterned the figure of Petkanov more closely on this real-life Zhivkov, who actually seems to have learned a few things, instead of creating a character who retains to the bitter end a set of beliefs unworthy of an undergraduate.

WHAT BEING JEWISH MEANS TO ME



Rosalyn Yalow
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As a Jew, I share a strong commitment to the Jewish intellectual tradition. That tradition places emphasis on learning--learning for the sake of understanding and perfecting our world, and learning for its own sake. Through the ages, we have taken pride in being known as the "People of the Book" and have carried our Torah and our traditions with dignity and affection. Even in the face of persecution and dispersion, and often denied access to centers of learning, the Jewish people, never satisfied with conventional answers, have always valued intellectual inquiry and continued to honor wisdom and learning.

Moreover, being Jewish means to me having a deep attachment to family. I grew up in an era of tightly-knit families which shaped our values and world-view. Today, the family, including the Jewish family, is said to be an endangered institution. It is time for us to rededicate ourselves to strengthening Jewish family life. Surely this is our best investment in the Jewish future.

Finally, Judaism represents a great synthesis of universal and Jewish values. For me as a Jew, there need be no conflict between science and religion. Moses Maimonides, philosopher and codifier of Halacha (Jewish law), also graced the world of medicine. He is a role model of living in two worlds, Jewish and universal, and of making them one.

The greatness of this country is that here we can be fully Jewish and fully American. American Jews are blessed to be living in a country where one need not compromise one's Jewishness to enjoy the opportunities of an open, pluralistic society.

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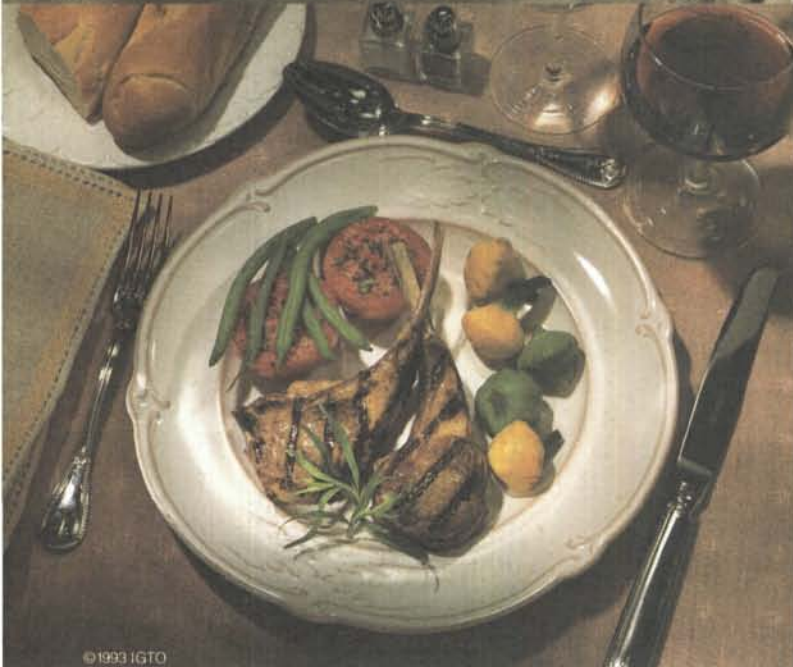
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